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**BEYOND BOUNDARIES: GLOBALIZATION, SOCCER, AND TRANSLOCAL  
FANDOM**

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by

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation interrogates the commercial construction and US fan understanding of place in global soccer. I first examine how soccer globalized, moving from a local game developed in post-industrial England to its current status as a global sport. Using Appadurai's scapes, I examine how soccer incorporates the geographic flow of people, money, media, technology, and ideology to create a globalized cultural form.

After building the foundation of a global game, I examine the case of the English Premier League (EPL) to detail the ways in which globalization of soccer has resulted in a commercialized sporting form. After establishing the EPL as a global brand, I examine how the clubs were sold and adapted to the American market, particularly through the process of reverse corporate nationalism. The EPL is sold as something authentically British to appeal to American audiences who engage with the game as a global form.

This theme is also evident in a key analytical component of this dissertation: a participant observation of a popular soccer-oriented sports bar in Washington D.C. I examine the ways in which fans engage with the global through their affiliation with global sport as enacted by their fandom and their reflections on it. I particularly highlight how fans are attempting to act and explain their actions in ways that are consistent with preconceived notions of fan authenticity, by enacting practices that then allow them to see themselves as connected to Europe, the UK and even specific cities and neighborhoods in various ways. Here fans are making connections with the global through acts of consumption, but also make meaning through those acts that situate them as cosmopolitans with hybrid identities. The use of soccer to engage with the global is thus a complex and multifaceted process.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

I have been fortunate in my life to leave the United States and spend some time abroad. A variety of interests has taken me beyond the borders of this country. Whether I was making a film, doing academic work, or simply traveling for leisure, one thing that constantly stood out was the popularity of sport around the world. While sport is found in many, if not all, societies, it was particularly interesting for me to see the global appeal of soccer (or football to the rest of the world). Soccer popularity around the world is surely not something that stands out to most people, but as an American, the overwhelming popularity of the game came as a bit of a surprise. I can recall playing pickup games with kids in Palestine and Turkey, watching adult players at the Adidas Futsal Park on a rooftop in Japan, cheering on Sparta Praha in a pub in the Czech Republic, the inescapable presence of David Beckham and Lionel Messi jerseys in Thailand and Egypt, and photographing the spectacular Soccer City Stadium and the World Cup aftermath in South Africa. As Toby Miller (2013) has suggested, perhaps indeed “Football is more popular than Jesus and John Lennon combined” (p. 274).

The global popularity of soccer manifests in many different ways. As the population of the world continues to grow, more and more people engage in the recreational play and sporting participation of soccer. Fans regularly are spectators of teams that play in league and interleague matches that take place around the world; as national team-based mega-event tournaments become increasingly spectacular, fans and tourists travel the world to partake in the festivities and consumption of the game. But,

perhaps most importantly, it is soccer's developing and increasingly inextricable relationship with transnational media industries that allows for the game to move from its local origins into something that is now more global in nature.

For example, during the past two FIFA World Cup Tournaments (in South Africa and Brazil), nearly half of the world's population viewed at least one minute of the tournament on television, and over 1 billion people tuned in to watch the 2014 World Cup championship match between Argentina and Germany (Kantar Media, 2014). It is not only the mediation of global mega-events that points to the increasingly global popularity of the game, many nations have invested heavily in developing leagues in the past twenty years, all of which come with media arrangements to telecast the matches in some form or another. In addition, many soccer leagues are televised around the world, well beyond the borders where the games are played. It comes as no surprise, perhaps, to hear about the Mexican league being broadcast to the large Mexican diaspora in the United States, but more impressive is that the top European leagues can be watched by fans nearly anywhere in the world. One need only to set foot in a pub somewhere around the world during match time to watch the English Premier League (EPL), Spanish La Liga, German Bundesliga, French Ligue 1, or the Italian Serie A. So expansive is the reach of European soccer that the largest and most watched of the continent's leagues, the English Premier League (EPL), is set to be the highest earning sport league in the world, in terms of media-generated income, by 2017 (UEFA, 2014).

Due to this proliferation of mediated soccer around the world, one might ask about how the game has globalized. What does that mean for clubs? And, who are the fans that watch global soccer? This dissertation seeks to address those questions. By



looking at soccer through a complex framework that analyzes the globalization of the game this dissertation analyzes global soccer from its production to its reception. It is not easy to simplify the processes of globalization and I will attempt no such feat here. However, what I do attempt in this project is to paint a complex picture of globalization, show how soccer as an industry and a cultural form has become globalized, and how fans, particularly those in the United States, engage with the now global texts associated with soccer.

Throughout, I will paint a picture that shows how through the processes of globalization, soccer clubs, particularly those that come from Europe, have altered their relationship with places, and now largely exist as global brands, as opposed to community service institutions, despite being situated and symbolically anchored in specific locations. Much of their global identity comes from how the leagues and clubs brand themselves, as will be examined. But it also comes from how the fans engaged with these globally branded clubs. The relationship with fans, brands and locations is complex. Those fans who now support these soccer-based global brands also claim to do so while also supporting sometimes very micro-focused locations. As will be illustrated by descriptions of fan viewing of televised soccer matches in a US sports bar, US-based fans of EPL clubs often situate their fandom in various global spaces – not just of, say, parts of London, but also of the UK and even Europe generally. For them, meanings of place are an important part of their fandom, even and perhaps because the fans themselves are not from the club-based places. However, such meanings are also contextualized by how fans enact these location-based means in a larger culture of consumption to build complex consumer-based cosmopolitan and hybrid identities.

## **Globalization and Sport**

Sport in general, and soccer specifically, is illustrative of the wider ongoing processes of globalization. It is my viewpoint that soccer provides an important case upon which we can examine the way a cultural industry has spread around the world, how laborers move across borders, the center of cultural production, the global flow of culture, the global economy, and global politics. Importantly, globalization in this sense moves beyond a simple reduction that focuses only on the global economy; here, the concept of globalization is leading to an ever increasingly interconnected world—economically, politically, culturally, and socially (Giddens, 1990).

As such, it is likely not an overstatement to suggest that most people living in the contemporary world moment are more connected around the globe than ever before. Whether it is through imperial exploration, military actions, the search for employment, the need for asylum, the pursuit of a quality education or the growth in global tourism, the flow of humans around the world represents one aspect of the increasing interconnectivity of the contemporary moment.

One can also consider the expansion of global capitalism and the international flow of capital and consumer commodities as representative of and a force driving the increasingly connected world. Our lives have become more and more intertwined with multinational and transnational corporations. We purchase goods that are designed in one country, built in a different one, all with materials mined and refined in yet another place. We eat food grown half way across the world, and we consume media that are produced and distributed at various locations around the planet. These examples are but a few of

the increasing connections that humans now experience in their everyday lives. Importantly, these global connections are largely facilitated by the presence of a globally dominant corporate-driven media system, the development of information communication technologies that connect people and businesses across space nearly instantaneously and, perhaps most importantly, the proliferation of a growing global consumer culture.

Communication and media, then, play essential roles in any processes or effects of global interconnectedness. Thinking about the global connections of people, commerce, and culture—and the communication technologies and infrastructure that largely facilitate them—global sport is a phenomenon that should not be ignored. While many discussions on globalization and media have analyzed the core cultural industries (Hesmondhalgh, 2012), such as the American film industry, or the major media corporations such as News Corp or Disney, sport is often set aside or removed from similar analyses, particularly when considering its relationship with media and is rarely situated as part of the global cultural industries. However, sport is arguably the most global of all cultural forms and the corporations that control and produce sport are some of the most prolific symbol creators in the world (Miller, 2013).

Importantly, sport can be conceptualized as both a personal practice (the participation in informal or organized physical culture) or as part of larger symbolic culture (via the cultural artifacts that the industries related to sport produce). In both cases, sport is also place-oriented and often can be read at different geographical scales, starting at the local and going all the way up to the global. Youth sports often take place in hyper-local communities (that only reach national and global levels in rare and

spectacular circumstances) and international sporting tournaments exist in all corners of the earth. Sport may also have different relationships to locations. It has been used as a tool to build and rebuild cities and nations both symbolically (as it was in South Africa to unite a post-apartheid transitioning society) (Höglund & Sundberg, 2008) and materially (as is often the case with bids for mega-events in order to redevelop infrastructure and downtrodden neighborhoods) (Cezne, 2014). Sport has also been implicated in national, ethnic, gender, class identity formation, and as a tool for state sponsored propaganda (Goig, 2008). Sport is simultaneously a product by and for the people and very solidly tied to localized meanings, while also existing as an increasingly corporate-owned, commercialized cultural form that is motivated to monetize and market beyond local boundaries has all but lost its one time amateur non-commercial values.

Sport, in its mediated form, reaches nearly all corners of the globe and provides a mediated cultural text to the largest collective audiences in the world. With the help of global communication technologies, sport now, more than ever, exists beyond the confines of the national, and increasingly operates globally. The use of the term “global” is important here. While using the term “international” implies a relationship to the nation state as the primary cultural marker, the use of global removes sport from the confines of the nation and sets it into a space that transcends borders. As such, something like the Olympic Games operates as international sport; that is, nations are the primary units that are competing against each other.

However, something such as the English Premier League is simultaneously international and global. The EPL, as will be discussed in detail later, is indeed related to England as a national container and is a business and cultural product of the United

Kingdom. However, it is not common that matches are played against teams from different countries, with players from various nationalities, and made available for live televisual viewing to fans anywhere around the world. Similar events happen between other nations as well. For example, the American-based National Football League now plays games in London, and distributes its games to Europe (“American football making worldwide inroads,” 2016). But soccer is especially a globalized mediated phenomenon. As mentioned previously, the European soccer leagues are available all around the world, increasingly so in parts of Asia and Africa. The hallmark mega-event tournaments—the FIFA World Cup and the Olympic Games—include participation from hundreds of nations and reach even more through events’ broadcasts. Again, these are international sport competitions, but they operate globally in terms of spectators, tourists, and economics. However, while the increasingly global flow of sport brings sporting texts to all corners of the earth, the effects of this increasingly globalizing industry are often contested.

Although some look at the global flow of sport as indicative of a cosmopolitan world (Bruce & Wheaton, 2009), others have suggested that through the global flow of sport, the national and the local are reinforced (particularly with the popularity of the aforementioned World Cup and Olympics) (Rowe, 2003a). During the FIFA World Cup, for example, many non-Brazilians support the Brazilian team and wear the famous yellow Brazilian national team jersey. In doing so, they are supporting a national team that does not necessarily represent them. However, while many fans are inclined to participate in the soft cosmopolitan practice of wearing a foreign national team jersey, the practice of national team competition in and of itself reinforces the concept of the nation

and many fans' nationality, and as a result, this produces a re-localization/nationalization of sport in the process of globalization (Rowe, 2003a). Thus, to reduce the discourse of sport and globalization to a single easily understood narrative fails to grapple with the complexities that develop when sport increasingly interacts with people across national and cultural borders.

As will be a guiding justification for writing this dissertation, I see sport as a complex and necessary area of focus for social and cultural research. Fortunately, over the past 25 years much research has developed in the area of sport. The fields of Sport Sociology and Sport History alone have contributed an invaluable amount of research regarding sport (see Dyreson, 2013). Similarly, scholars coming from Sociology, Geography, Journalism, and Media Studies have also contributed to the literature on sport and media (see Conner, 2014). Even within the subfield of globalization studies, there are scholars who are researching sport (Sandvoss, 2013). These scholars have helped establish the field and have provided numerous analyses that cover everything from post-colonial studies (Bale & Cronin, 2003) to the prevalence of female sports in the Olympics (Fink, 2015), or its coverage as a racially and globally diverse event (Hardin, Dodd, Chance, & Walsdorf, 2004). However, when considering the combination of sport, media, and globalization, there are endless areas of analysis and this leaves plenty of spaces where scholarly work needs to be done.

Focusing on the globalization of soccer, the game's growing involvement with media industries and soccer's transnational reception is central to the purpose of this dissertation. Throughout this dissertation, I analyze the game's global diffusion, its commercialization and relationship with media industries, and the way that US-based

fans consume the sport and make meaning from their engagement. While a dissertation that focuses on the globalization of soccer could focus on numerous case studies, the most compelling case for these analyses arguably comes from the globally dominant English Premier League; however, when necessary, other leagues will factor into the discussion to help build the arguments and illustrate the phenomena being discussed.

Of particular interest to this dissertation is the growing relationship between global soccer and media industries. The mediation of soccer has undoubtedly changed the game in many ways, as has been documented by various scholars (Murray, 1998). Specifically, soccer's relationship with global media has allowed the major clubs in European soccer to operate as global brands that now have followings in all parts of the world. Specific to the goals of this dissertation is mapping out the global diffusion of major European clubs, analyzing the tensions produced by the globalization of the clubs, and understanding the ways in which fans in America (historically less interested in soccer than many other places) make meaning of the game through their participation in European soccer fandom.

### **Contributions**

Using a multidimensional approach, this dissertation is a necessary contribution to growing body of literature related to globalization, media, and sport. It contributes to the literature in three specific ways. First, this dissertation engages with global sport through a global media studies perspective. Global media studies, as an academic field, has not engaged with the study of global sport nearly as much as it engages with other forms of popular culture. Thus, using a global media studies perspective is a much-needed

approach to investigate globalization and sport. Studies have previously considered global sport and the flow around the world, but there is a gap in the literature when it comes to sport and globalization in relation to the concepts of hybridity and cosmopolitanism, and what people are doing with global sport around the world, particularly in the American context.

The use of a global media studies approach is necessarily complex and multifaceted. As Thussu (2000) points out, the study of global media takes place through various paradigms. This project uses both a cultural studies and critical theory approach. Using a cultural studies approach allows this dissertation to investigate meanings in the text, and the ways that those who consume the texts make meanings from it. The use of a critical approach allows for an analysis of power relations and the politics embedded in the globalization of soccer, which is also key given its involvement with influential media conglomerates and the large capitalization involved with soccer organizations such as the EPL.

Second, this dissertation is built around a qualitative, ethnographically inspired approach to the study of globalization, media, and sport. While ethnography is by no means a novel approach to the study of globalization and/or sport, using ethnographic methods in *media studies* to focus on globalization and sport presents an interesting and needed contribution to the literature. Murphy and Kraidy (2003) suggest that ethnographic methods are not used enough in media studies (particularly when discussing issues of globalization), and when used, ethnographic approaches are often reduced to one-off studies of audience reception, without paying attention to the finer details of immersion within a scene and the delicate details of participant observation. Thus, using



an ethnographically inspired approach as a guiding research method, and focusing on media and sport in a globalized context, makes a significant contribution to the literature on globalization, media, and sport from a methodological approach that is arguably more needed in media studies.

Third, this dissertation focuses specifically on the local aspect of global soccer using the United States as a node in the network of global soccer. The processes of globalization are unevenly distributed around the world with the global South disproportionately feeling the negative effects (Miller, 2014). As such, early global media studies scholars largely focused on the dissemination of western (American) cultural products around the world (Schiller, 1992). Schiller, among others, used a political economy approach to theorize power relations and the possible effects of uneven cultural flows. This led to the development of dependency-based theories and the cultural imperialism thesis (Schiller, 1992). While that approach is valid and important, the nature of global media has changed. Scholars such as anthropologists Arjun Appadurai (1996) and Jan Nederveen Pieterse (2015) and media studies scholar Marwan Kraidy (2002) have thoroughly articulated new ideas within globalization and global media studies. The arguments rest on an understanding that cultural flows are no longer only starting from America and spreading outward. Rather, the world is now connected through various “scapes” (Appadurai, 1996). These connections allow for geographic movement of bodies, capital, and culture. As such, conceptual understandings of globalization that take cultural studies approaches and focus on issues including identity, nationality, and diaspora become central to an analysis of global media studies. One such understanding is that there is simultaneously a global system and processes of local reception around the

world; this cocktail of geographic-based distribution and exhibition can lead to complex and surprising meaning-making about soccer, and place, by both marketers and audiences.

The approach that this dissertation takes is one that examines soccer as part of the global system of signs, and subsequently how the cultural form originates from various places and flows across the world and into the United States. This approach will interrogate the changing mediasport landscape by using the English Premier League as a case study. In recent years, the English Premier League has expanded its business to new parts of the globe and subsequently expanded its fan base globally. To do this, the EPL has developed new media deals in various parts of Asia and more recently into the United States. The changing political economy of global sport and the cultural “contra flow” (Rowe, 2012) into the United States is thus examined as part of this project. However, in order to present a well-rounded understanding of global soccer, this project also studies the people who consume those texts and the way global sport is implicated in the formation of cosmopolitan/hybrid cultural identities.

In order to set up the remainder of this study, the rest of this chapter will focus on explicating the main concepts and developing the theoretical understanding that this dissertation takes. Following the development of the structural elements of this dissertation, I will give a brief overview of the remaining chapters, including their methodological approaches, units of study, and basic arguments.

## **Media and sport**

The relationship between media and sport has become so intertwined that multiple scholars have developed separate but very similar conceptualizations of the relationships. Jhally, (1989), for example, has conceptualized the relationship as a Media/Sport Complex as many more people experience sport via media than through direct attendance; others have added other elements or emphases, such as the Media-Sport-Cultural Complex (Rowe, 2003b) and MediaSport (Wenner, 1989). What all these conceptualizations have in common is a focus on the dependency of sport on media, and of media industries on sport. It is easy to point out that sport has likely developed as it has because of local, national, and global media (Horne, 2005), but it is also necessary to point out that in a commercial media system, such as the one in the United States, sporting events such as the NFL Super Bowl provide the largest audiences which allow for higher ratings and higher advertising rates that ultimately add to the revenue and viability of media industries—thus the dependency and effects are circular rather than linear.

The relationship between media and global sport has developed over time. While the telegraph and broadcast network radio originally allowed fans around the world to stay engaged with sport beyond the confines of local activity, it was the development of satellite communications that accelerated the connection of the world and allowed media to transcend the restrictions of time and space—moving the world to a collective global sporting environment (Horne, 2005). Aided also by the deregulation policies of the 1980s, sport and media developed a strong relationship that continues to be mutually beneficial (Horne, 2005).

Both the history of organized sports and the nature of public culture have influenced how global sports circulate around the globe today. As sport evolved, the games were organized into leagues based on regions and nations (Goldblatt, 2014a). Many of the early global sports were leftovers of British colonial history, with association football, rugby union, and cricket all diffusing throughout the British Empire and its trading partners (Goldblatt, 2014a). After sports' rules and organizations became codified, international sport developed, with games taking place between various local and regional teams, and eventually national teams. However, it was not until the development of a global public culture that international and global sport developed to the level that we see it at today.

Global public culture, as explicated by Roche (2002), developed out of the expansion of capitalism and the increasing middle class. The people of the middle class had more money and time for leisure and started to leave their homes. This allowed peoples to transcend national borders for more than just trade. Perhaps most representative of this early public culture are the international expos that first appeared in London, Paris, and Chicago, which allowed for international tourists and an exchange of goods, information, and culture. Developing along with the expos were international sporting events. The earliest of the Olympic Games were held in connection with international expos, and eventually developed into its own genre. Then, eventually developing out of the Olympic Games was the FIFA World Cup. While these events have traditionally been established on missions suggesting a goal of progressive internationalism and cross-cultural connections, they have, since their earliest

developments, in fact been focused on tourism and profit, not just the harmonious movement of culture.

With the development of television, sport proliferated and expos started to wane Roche (2002). Television provided more opportunity for the dissemination of sport to the most remote areas, to countries that could not regularly host sporting events, and to people of all classes. The mediation of sport has changed way that sport is consumed and the way that it is played. Fans regularly engage with sport via television and other visual media more regularly than they do via live performance, and the rules of various games have been changed to aid in the mediated attraction of certain sports (Murray, 1998). As mediated sport expands around the world, the games necessarily have to adapt to global audience preferences, as was the case during the 1994 FIFA World Cup, which took place in the United States, where the rules governing overtime play were changed to be more attractive to American audiences (Murray, 1998).

Along with the ability to disseminate sport, television also provided the best advertising medium. The relationship between television and sport led to various changes in the games, not only in the way that they were played and consumed—lengthening games in some sports as television commercials are added, for instance—but also in the physical appearance of the stadiums and players. Perhaps this is most dynamically illustrated via the ubiquitous sponsorships that are now prevalent on nearly all soccer jerseys around the world. Take, for example, the globally popular teams of Real Madrid or Manchester United. Real Madrid, whose popularity is unprecedented throughout much of the globe, has one of the world’s best players (Cristiano Ronaldo), and the Emirates Airlines logo emblazoned on all of its players chests—therefore, when fans across the

world support their favorite Real Madrid players they also support Emirates Airlines. Manchester United, also globally popular, now sports the iconic Chevrolet bowtie emblem on the front of its jersey. Interestingly, it is only the major North American sports leagues that have yet to give in and sell the prime real estate on the front of their jerseys. However, both soccer and auto racing in the United States do have prominent sponsorships on jerseys and cars, respectively; and starting with the 2017/18 season, the NBA will implement a three-year trial program with sponsors on jerseys (Gelston, 2016).

The relationships between sport and media, then, have provided many opportunities for sporting leagues, media industries, and sponsoring corporations to perpetuate and capitalize on sports popularity. Moreover, the organizers of these leagues and events benefit greatly from the desire of countries and municipalities to host events, leagues, and teams, although the assumed benefits of such events to their hosts is negligible (Whitson & Horne, 2006). Mega events, such as the Olympics and World Cup, have often been largely subsidized by the public, via tax dollars, or directly through governments, and thus have proven very financially successful for the organizations and the sponsors, who contribute only a fraction to the overall budget, but reap nearly all of the benefits from broadcast rights, licensing deals, and direct sponsorship. The relationship with media and the global audience allows for the sporting organizations to profit while the cost of development and the problems of logistics are left to the host nations. At the national level (specifically in the United States), this also happens, with the development of new stadia to entice teams to move or stay depending on the particulars of the situation. The stadia are often subsidized by taxes on local residents, but the profits remain in the hands of the corporations who run the teams (Schimmel, 2015).

While sport in general has developed alongside of media, most directly related to the goals of this dissertation is a consideration of the role of media (and its commercial logics) in the development, promotion and dissemination of European soccer leagues. As has been argued by other scholars, media have aided in the spectacularization of sport (Bélanger, 2009; Gruneau & Whitson, 1994; Wenner, 1998). Debord argues that the spectacle is the “moment when the commodity has attained the total occupation of social life” (Debord, 2000, p. 42). This is evident in the way that the Olympics and the World Cup has developed into more than just sporting events, but are now enormous commodity-driven, commercial events that are government subsidized and excessively consumed (Roche, 2002). The same can be said about the major European soccer leagues. Historically, soccer teams and media have come together, with the help of national governments, to promote economic, ideological, and political interests (Bélanger, 2009).

It is evident that throughout history, sport and media have developed a symbiotic relationship that has reflected the changes in modernity and benefited both the sport and media industries via the commercialization of the cultural form, which has led to commercially dominated sport that has developed into a cultural commodity (Jackson, 2015). Cultural commodities are increasingly important in capitalist economies as they reflect growth and provide opportunity for continued growth, profit and control. Sport in general exists as an important cultural commodity as it moves around the world in various ways, employs numerous people throughout the production and distribution process, and facilitates the circulation of labor, symbols, and people around the world (Miller, Lawrence, McKay, & Rowe, 2001). It is the relationship between sports and media that largely facilitates the globalization of sport—sport becomes an increasingly

important player in the global economy, and the subsequent interconnectivity of social groups around the world.

### **Soccer and Place-based Identity**

Despite the discussions above of the centrifugal influences of global sport—being able to watch and consume/display fandom of given teams throughout the world—sports, and soccer specifically, still involves teams situated in, and strongly identified with, particular locations and the cultural connotations of those locations. In their earliest manifestations, much of English sport was played between members of the upper classes—particularly between students and aristocrats—and territory was insignificant (Armstrong & Giulianotti, 2001). However, as sports began to diffuse nationally and globally, territory became an important factor in the competition. This, of course, was accompanied by the growth of nationalism that preceded World War I and resulted in the emergence of national soccer teams outside of Great Britain. In 1904, The Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) was formed—a governing body to manage all things soccer, including matches between teams representing nation states, which according to (Armstrong & Giulianotti, 2001) served to highlight national and cultural differences. Importantly, however, early understandings of “National,” according to Poli (2007), were rooted purely in terms of residency, and not necessarily in terms of birth. This led to many national teams employing players from various places, regardless of passport and place of origin.

Nevertheless, the inter-war period saw an increase of nationalism and a rise of fascism in Europe, which allowed sport to be used in very political ways. Famously, both



Italy and Germany used sport as a tool of the state and national development (Poli, 2007). Under Nazi rule, Germany conspicuously used the Olympic Games to display the power and success of its regime and highlight its fascist ideology. However, sport is important not only in the promotion of ideology internationally, but is instrumental in the production of nationalism and the legitimacy of the state. In order to build a national consciousness, the national populace must be homogenized so that differing local/cultural identities are downplayed and the national is the unifying identity through which citizens conceptualize themselves. According to Lefebvre's view, "the modern state is grounded intrinsically on the drive to rationalize, unify, and homogenize social relations within its territorial space" (quoted in Brenner, 1999, p. 49).

Importantly, it is useful to understand the nation through Benedict Anderson's, (2006) framework, which develops an understanding of the nation as an "imagined community." Anderson has argued that the nation is nothing more than a social construct, and exists in the minds of people as imagined. Anderson builds his argument on the premise that most people that are part of a nation never actually know each other and only really exist in moments of collective communion. Nationalism, then, can be seen as the production and celebration of those imagined communities, or perhaps more importantly, as Gellner (2009) has put it, nationalism is the process through which the state, the elites, and the citizens invent nations where they do not otherwise exist. Hobsbawm & Ranger (1992) argue that the nation and nationalism are "invented traditions." That is, it is the stories, rituals, and traditions that make up the concept of the nation, but are in fact not folk traditions, and are instead new inventions of what makes up the identity of the nation. Rowe, McKay, & Miller (1998) define nationalism as the

symbolic process of nation making. Through the articulation of nationalism, there is a symbolic binding of citizens to the constructed concept of the nation. For Anderson, the development of the imagined community was in large part related to the development of media across a broad territory, particularly newspapers. The advent of national newspapers allowed members to feel connected to each other regardless of time and space, and the national community is invented through the sharing of common ideas and rituals. James Carey (2002) similarly sees a relationship between the production of the nation and media, arguing that along with geography and history, nations now live in a media space, and explains the importance of media in creating a sense of national community. He writes, “this is the psychology of the nation as sociological organism that moves calendrically through homogenous time: a solid community, invisible and anonymous, united by a shared reality existing under the date of a newspaper or the dailiness of television broadcasts” (2002, p. 200).

Media culture generally can have complicated relationships to symbolic constructions of place and what they mean to different audiences. Popular cultural forms like marketing and advertising can accentuate enticing images of exotic nations for a domestic population, often reinforcing stereotypes of these lands; conversely, US brands sold abroad present the US as characterized by affluent Hollywood stars or rugged cigarette-smoking cowboys (McAllister & Cooke, 2016). Different diasporic populations can consume media from their place of origin to cultivate feelings of reconnection to that place even while surrounded by an alienating environment that constructs them as “other” (Karim, 2003)

Sport, and its relationship with media, plays an essential role in helping to create the symbolic construction of places the nation. For example, during the rise of fascism in Europe, many fascist leaders, including Spain's Francisco Franco and Italy's Benito Mussolini, saw the composition of their country's national and premier soccer club teams as important symbolic entities, and thus restricted the use of foreign players in various ways. While immigrant players were indeed used by the fascists, they were often nationalized and became citizens of their new nation, rather than playing as immigrants from a foreign land. These quotas often still remain, and have only recently been challenged by legislation based on the European Union laws regarding labor movement. Moreover, the importance of sport in the construction and maintenance of the nation is evident in the attention that many countries have given to sport through the creation of government organizations to oversee it.

The nation, then, can be thought of as a constructed identity that is often times represented through sport or reinforced by sport. While international sport is often conducted through the rhetoric of internationalism and open cultural exchange, many international sporting events result in the extreme performance of nationality. One need only watch the Olympic Games or the FIFA World Cup to see fans engaged in the celebration of the nation. Similarly, many diasporic groups, including those seeking asylum from oppressive governments, still support the imagined national community through their engagement with sport. For some, particular sports are representative of a unique national identity. Rowe and Gilmour (2008) have argued that hockey is often considered essential to Canadian nationality, or that rugby is a key part of Australian national cultural identity. Similarly, soccer is key to the symbolic construction of many

national or local based identities. And it is not just soccer as a form of play that is representative of place-based identities, but rather the composition of the team, the attached meanings of the team, and the style of play are all important in place-based identities.

Brazil perhaps serves as the best example of how race and class have been important factors in the makeup of national and club teams. Star players on Brazil's winning World Cup teams are important in the understanding of Brazilian national symbolism. While historically a racially complex society, the inclusion of players of color and the stardom of those players was important in shifting the meaning of Brazil and the inclusion of all races into the national consciousness. The players on the Brazilian team also played with what many consider a uniquely Brazilian style—o jogo bonito (the beautiful game). Other nations have what they consider unique national styles of play as well: the English game is known for its force and power, while the Dutch players believe in total football, a game distinctly different from that of many other Europeans. Thus, the way in which the game is played will vary depending on where the game is played (Goldblatt, 2014a).

Even at the local/city level, place is importantly related to soccer. Again in Brazil, the intense rivalry between São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro is often played out on the pitch, but is often considered representative of territorial rivalries (Goldblatt, 2014a). As will be discussed more in Chapter 4, in England, the matches between Manchester City and Manchester United are simultaneously soccer matches for sporting entertainment, but also constructed as battles for the symbolic hegemony of the post-industrial working class city.

As the world globalizes, the relationships between sporting organizations and their spatial anchors undoubtedly change. Fans around the world support teams from afar, teams are commercialized and exist for profit, and the responsibility to the local is necessarily altered. Who then are fans supporting? How are identities challenged and altered through these processes? While teams have historically had strong place-based attachments, both at the national and city levels, how do fans understand these attachments as they support teams from sports bars around the world?

In the chapters that follow, this dissertation engages with an analysis of globalization by considering sport as a cultural form central to the ongoing processes of globalization, and through which various observations and analyses are made to further the literature on globalization. Specifically, this dissertation uses sport as a means to investigate the flow of culture around the world, and how that flow relates to changing spatial identities. In each of the chapters that follow, this dissertation will explore the complexity of the local and the global, particularly in relation to televised global soccer: what is its mediated and commodified nature, and what are some ways that fans use and consume it? Each of these chapters is discussed in detail below.

### **Chapter Breakdown**

Chapter 2 details the foundation of the approach that this dissertation takes. It provides a macro-level, top-down analysis of globalization and sport. Specifically, this chapter focuses on the globalization of soccer, including forms of soccer that are especially tied to globalization such as both mega-events and European soccer leagues. The analytical framework used in this chapter applies Appadurai's five "scapes" model to

global soccer, in order to provide a robust description and mapping out of how soccer has globalized, where the center of soccer is situated, and to what degree the cultural industries have facilitated a new cultural globalscape of soccer. Using the five scapes, this chapter presents a mapping that shows the complex nature of global soccer, pushing back against the often-argued Americanization/cultural imperialism understanding of global sport. The globalization of soccer has strongly changed the flows of soccer around the world, particularly as the global soccer mediascape has taken the game to new locations, but also through a changing ethnoscapes, ideoscapes and financescapes.

Chapter 3 focuses on the way that clubs have responded to globalization, and what that means for the place-based identity associated with clubs. The primary focus of this chapter is to understand the ways in which the European soccer clubs now operate as global brands. Using an analytical approach that starts from critical political economy, but also relies on concepts such as corporate nationalism, this chapter shows the ways in which the global clubs operate as transnational corporations that have expanded to new global markets, and have therefore symbolically constructed themselves as needed in the process of adapting to local markets and selling a brand based on places. The chapter highlights how the EPL has attempted to brand itself to the US through its Britishness; a textual analysis of one EPL promotion is engaged to illustrate some of these strategies.

Chapter 4 reduces the scale even further and focuses on the local environment of fan media engagement. Using American-based supporter groups as the primary unit of observation, this chapter is developed around participant observation and qualitative interviews with American-based soccer supporters, particularly those supporters of European-based global soccer clubs. The fieldwork that informs this chapter took place in

Washington D.C., where I interacted with and observed multiple supporters groups made up of individuals from diverse backgrounds—varying in ethnicity, nationality, gender, and class. This chapter relies on an analytical approach that focuses on the role of transnational cultural flows in producing cosmopolitan/transnational identities. The primary research question in this chapter is, in what ways do US-located fans of European soccer, make meaning out of their engagement with the sport? Here, it is argued that the practice of global sports viewing is, for some, a vehicle that allows fans to engage with the global. While these cosmopolitan behaviors are in some ways related to consumption, this chapter ultimately suggests that the fan practice is driven by a passionate desire to expand beyond the borders of the United States, and incorporate global soccer into their hybrid identities. Nevertheless, those identities are possibly made up of brand affiliations rather than political and cultural understandings of place.

Chapter 5 serves as the conclusion for the dissertation. As such, it ties the ideas in the chapters together and articulates the dissertation's major arguments. This chapter re-engages each chapter's arguments in light of the empirical findings of Chapter 4. Ultimately, this chapter develops relevant questions about the concept of global citizenship, particularly as it relates to sport and commercially produced culture. This chapter ends with a discussion on the future of sport and globalization and points to some directions in which the field of study might move.

## Chapter 2

### The Global Game

Considering the global popularity of soccer, it is likely hard for even those who are completely uninterested in sport to imagine a world without it. Kids throughout the world play soccer, fans watch in stadiums and on television, and global icons, such as Lionel Messi, appear in commercials for a variety of products well beyond the borders of their nationality. The presence of soccer is seemingly inescapable. Professional soccer, especially the leagues from Europe, is extremely popular. At the time of this writing, the English Premier League (EPL) is shown in 212 countries and territories around the world, via its association with 80 different broadcasters, well beyond the reach of any substantial English diaspora (“Premier League international rights” 2016). With a global reach and a cumulative audience of nearly five billion, the single case of the English Premier League demonstrates how the game is being removed from its association with the local, and has become increasingly global—in terms of distribution, labor, audiences, and on-field play (“Premier League - Global Media Platform,” 2016)

In the United States, a country notoriously ambivalent toward soccer—it has even been called un-American by nationally televised news personalities (Beinart, 2014)—international soccer fandom and attention to various leagues (particularly those from Europe) is clearly on the rise (Maese, 2014). Although it is by no means a premier sport in the United States, (American football, followed by baseball, remain in the top two spots in the US) (Rovell, 2014), the top-level domestic soccer league (Major League Soccer) has continued to expand and has recently shown strong performance in television



ratings, specifically on ESPN and ESPN2 where viewers increased 32 percent over last year (Stephenson, 2016). Major League Soccer in the US also has a strong international component. The league has doubled down on efforts to add aging European, Latin American, and African star power to boost national and global fan interest in the game. Moreover, both the US men and women's national team performances in their respective World Cup tournaments have similarly fostered a steady increase in interest by fans in the international game ("World Cup Final smashes TV records" 2015).

Most importantly for this dissertation, as the European game has become more accessible in the US on cable television and satellite systems and as soccer has turned its attention to branding itself in the US market, fans are increasingly paying attention to non-US clubs, particularly those clubs from the English Premier League, but also the German Bundesliga, and the Spanish La Liga—all of which have American media deals and are easily viewed via the various channels of mass and personal media. Soccer leagues, such as the EPL, continue to flow around the world, including into the United States, making it necessary to understand them as part of the larger processes of globalization.

While globalization has been one of the most discussed concepts within contemporary cultural studies (Denning, 2001), it is still a relevant concept to explore, as the nature of globalization continues to change. Scholarship focused on globalization questions the basis and consequences of post-industrial capitalism, economic flows, media technology, and the influence of (largely) western popular culture throughout the world. When researching sport within a globalization framework, many scholars have developed their own conceptual understandings. Some have used macro-level approaches

investigating particular aspects of sport including the impact of globalization on player migration (Maguire & Bale, 1994); the interplay of structure and agency on sport fandom (Cantelon & Murray, 1993) and the impact of globalization on local sport (Harvey, Rail, & Thibault, 1996). Others have attempted to reconceptualize the role of globalization in sport according to new frameworks and theoretical understandings, including the Americanization of sport, which results in increasing commercialization of sport according to the American model of commercial media and professionalism and the diffusion of American sports and sports brand around the world, including the NFL and Nike (Maguire, 1993; McKay & Miller, 1991); mundialization, which suggests that instead of an American dominance, sport culture is becoming influenced by all sports from around the world, giving voice to those places that have otherwise been situated in the global periphery (Wagner, 1990); or creolization—where local communities respond to globalization by making the global sporting form work in a local context, even if that means changing the rules and meanings at times (Houlihan, 1994). Most recently, however, there has been an increased interest in understanding the interplay of the global and local of sport as it relates to globalization (Andrews, Jackson, & Mazur, 1996; Boyle & Haynes, 1996; Donnelly, 1996; Jackson, 2015; Jackson & Andrews, 1999).

This dissertation is largely built around a desire to interrogate the processes of globalization on sport as a cultural form, and uses the case of global soccer to do so. By focusing on the global soccer cultural industry, this dissertation examines the role of sport in globalization and the impact of globalization on sport, both of which relate to the ways in which people around the world experience globalization. As a key focus of this dissertation is to investigate the globalization of sport as it may complicate cultural

meanings of place, it is necessary to situate soccer within a framework of globalization. Accordingly, this chapter begins with a top down macro-level approach to consider the ways in which soccer has globalized as a sport and cultural industry, how the dominant leagues of Europe have globalized as transnational corporations, and the role that global media has played in these globalization processes. This will allow for a historicized foundation upon which the current globalization of the sport can be understood.

While numerous analytical frameworks have been developed to allow for robust analyses of globalization, one such approach, developed by cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1996), considers the complex multidirectional nature of globalization processes (as opposed to many approaches that see globalization as a more current manifestation of cultural imperialism). Appadurai's framework suggests that any analysis of globalization should consider five specific categories that he argues are the building blocks of cultural globalization. In each category, different actors are predominant: ethnoscapesc—the flow of people around the world largely comprised of labor, tourists, immigrants, refugees, guest workers; technoscapes—the global availability of technology; financescapes—the flow of global capital across borders in search of new ventures and never-ending profits; mediascapes—the global web of media industries, devices and messages that aids in creating imagined worlds through narratives and images; and ideoscapes—the movement of politically driven symbols and ideologies across space. Through this conceptualization, Appadurai argues that people come into contact with the scapes and in turn develop “imagined worlds.” These worlds are the global versions of what Benedict Anderson (2006) has famously called “imagined communities.” In this sense, Appadurai is expanding Anderson's notion of nationalism to

include the role of globalization in people's imagination of their community/world. When applied to the globalization of popular culture, this framework allows one to examine the complex and interrelated ways in which culture flows around the world, moving beyond simplistic understandings of Cultural Imperialism or Cultural Globalization. In applying Appadurai's scapes to real world examples, scholars can understand the ways in which global can be found in nearly all phenomena.

However, it should be noted that Appadurai's globalization framework is not without its own shortcomings. Appadurai posits a complex world of flows that potentially redefines the local in the context of the global, and various scholars have commented on and expanded Appadurai's original framework. Some have pointed out that cultural flows have existed since before modernity, and that Appadurai's focus on the modern is shortsighted and fails to incorporate the historical complexity that has led to the modern nation state (Heyman & Campbell, 2009). Current transnational cultural flows have certainly attracted much analytical attention, but it is also important to understand those flows as part of historical processes that have existed for hundreds of years.

Moreover, while Appadurai seemingly suggests that the various flows and scapes obliterate borders, Heyman and Campbell (2009) have suggested that rather than erase borders, "flows of various sorts both build up and tear down territorial units" (p. 140). Here Heyman and Campbell are suggesting, just as David Rowe (2003a) does, that the processes and manifestations of globalization actually strengthen and reinforce borders (Andreas and Snyder, 2000).

Martin Albrow (1997) extends Appadurai's scapes and adds a sixth scape—the socioscape—in an attempt to add the lived experience and social relations to any analysis

of globalization. The socioscape develops at the intersection of various sociospheres, which are free of community, national and territorial boundaries. Here Albrow is suggesting that the socioscape includes any attachment to a place that occurs on the basis of elective belonging, regardless of physical distances or territorial boundaries (Rossi, 2007). Social media and its global reach may also complicate Appadurai's theoretical framework. Jin and Yoon (2016), for example, discuss the "social mediascape" to interrogate social media's role in globalizing popular culture which both illustrates the flexibility of the mediascape concept and its need for refinement in changing socio-cultural and technical contexts of the global.

While Appadurai's seminal work on scapes has been critiqued and expanded, it nevertheless offers a particularly useful framework for analyzing the ever-globalizing nature of sport, especially over the past 25 years—considering the intensification of sport tourism, labor migration, global capital, and the heightened mediation, commercialization and commodification of sport. Thus, this chapter uses Appadurai's "scapes" as a tool to consider the ways in which soccer exists as a *globalized* sports cultural form. While this macro-level perspective addresses soccer generally, the main interest of this chapter is to consider the way the top European leagues have become globalized.

### **Soccer and Globalization**

Research on the relationship between globalization and sport comes from many differing perspectives, with foci on any number of phenomena. Where this dissertation adds to the literature is in its focus on the relationship between the globalization of sport, place, and the way that fans experience the global through their sports fandom. Over time

soccer has developed deep attachments to specific places—consider the way that teams are routinely described via the location of their headquarters, both locally and nationally; English National Team, Manchester United—but as sport globalizes, diasporic communities grow, and new fans start to emerge, one must ask about the relationship between sport and place. On the one hand, sport still has strong ties to place—stadiums, live events, media markets, and so on. On the other hand, the identity of clubs and the meanings that people make are increasingly globalized and deterritorialized.

Accordingly, in this chapter I layout the framework for the argument that the processes of globalization have fundamentally altered the relationship between sport and place. In the coming chapters, the concepts of team/place identity and the role of sport in the construction of those identities will be further developed. However, to build a foundation through which I can approach this argument, this chapter will first apply Appadurai's concept of "scapes" to the globalization of European soccer. This allows for an understanding of how the mega soccer clubs of Europe have become detached from their once spatial anchors, and now exist almost completely as global, and therefore placeless, entities.

### **Global Soccer's Ethnoscape**

There is perhaps no more easily observable process of globalization than the movement of bodies around the planet. While this is by no means a new phenomenon, it is evident that the speed with which people are crossing borders is reaching unprecedented heights. At the time of this writing, political discourse around the world is filled with varying perspectives on the movement of refugees and immigrants across

borders, backlash against the multicultural policies of European countries, and increased xenophobia within the American voting populous. Sport is integral in the movement of people around in various ways. Sporting labor moves around in search of work, immigrants bring interest in games that may not be local in nature, and the support system of global sport is largely global itself.

### **Labor**

One can see that the changing ethnoscape of the world is reflected in the labor makeup of the top soccer leagues around the world. Just as people from middle- and low-income nations routinely seek work in higher-income nations, so too do the skilled soccer laborers of the periphery. The movement of players around the world is important as it changes the cultural makeup of teams and ultimately relates to who represents the nation or the local in relation to the various soccer teams around the world. In a world where place-based identities are strong and are often reinforced through displays of nationalism, localism, and place-branding efforts, the influx of foreign players and the changing ethnic makeup of local and national sporting teams effectively complicates the image of a local soccer player and the imagined worlds of engaged in soccer fandom.

The French National Team that won the 1998 FIFA World Cup perhaps most famously illustrates this phenomenon. In the significant writings about the world championship squad, often the ethnic makeup of the squad stands out (Dauncey, Ervine, & Kilcline, 2014). The 1998 squad is used here as an example of both the changing ethnoscape of soccer's national teams, but also the often inflammatory discourse that surrounds it. In the case of France 1998, many players were either foreign born, or the children of immigrants, including France's star player Zinedine Zidane (the child of

Algerian immigrants), Patrick Vieira (born in Senegal), and Thierry Henry (the child of French West Indian immigrants). Although such diversity was often celebrated, in certain circumstances, such as Zidane's much seen and discussed head-butt during the World Cup, news coverage framed transgressions by the non-white, non-French-born as racialized and uncivilized (Jiwani, 2008). The evolving ethnoscape in France's national team has continued to change with the 2016 lineup featuring star player Dimitri Payet (from the French overseas territory Reunion), Patrice Evra (born in Senegal) and Paul Pogba (the child of Guinean parents).

However, France is not the only nation that has an ethnically diverse national team. As the world continues to feel the effects of globalization, the national teams of many nations become more ethnically and culturally diverse. Using the 2014 FIFA World Cup as snapshot of the changing ethnoscape of National Soccer teams, (Goldblatt, 2014b) explains:

In the last two decades new flows of refugees and economic migrants into Europe have made their footballing mark: Italy's first black international and undisputed star Mario Balotelli; a Swiss side that is almost two-thirds of migrant descent; players of African-German and African-Spanish roots.

Goldblatt further explains how the ethnoscape is also evident in the stands at major sporting tournaments:

in the stands, there is plenty of evidence of...migrant communities – Japanese Brazilians who left for São Paulo's coffee plantations in the late 19th century and Korean-Americans. These diaspora communities, who remain in emotional and practical dialogue with their country of origin, are



best represented by Iran and Algeria. Coach Carlos Queiroz has called on Iranians born in Sweden, the Netherlands and Germany. Sixteen members of the Algerian squad were born in France but opted for North Africa.

The composition of national teams are useful in illustrating the movement of immigrants and refugees that often have ties to colonial histories or are the result of current political crises. But, the makeup of national league soccer labor is also illustrative in the changing ethnoscape of top-level soccer labor. It is important here to stop and discuss some of the legal aspects to the movement of players. For much of soccer's history, the ability of a player to represent a national team rested in that player's desire to do so. However, as the prestige of national teams has increased and the desire to win is now coveted nearly worldwide, players were increasingly being recruited and paid to represent nations of which they have no actual affiliation. FIFA now has policy in place that limits the availability of a player to represent a nation on cultural proximity. That is, players can represent nations of which they are citizens, their parents are/were citizens, or to which they have documentable cultural ties—via prolonged residency or affiliation through distant relatives or colonial legacies.

However, the movement of players for private enterprise (i.e., league play in specific countries) is importantly influenced by the Bosman ruling of 1995, which relied on free trade laws throughout the European Union to allow for the free movement of soccer players across the continent in search of the best employment options. No longer does a Dutch player have to play in the lackluster and low paying league of the Netherlands; rather, they are free to seek employment throughout the entire EU without

having to pay a transfer fee to their original club (players are increasingly moving to China, the Middle East, and the United States now as well). Moreover, the Bosman ruling helped in globalizing the makeup of teams. Although some European countries have strict laws regarding immigration, through the Bosman ruling, as long as foreign nationals are in the EU, they are eligible to play. Thus, by allowing immigrants to come into Europe under more relaxed local immigration laws in various countries, the teams anywhere in European Union and the UK could then transfer players through European Union Laws (Poli, 2007).

While the Bosman ruling itself did not directly result in the internationalization of European soccer leagues, the result of the 1995 ruling surely aided an internationalization process that was well underway. Throughout the history of the big five European leagues (England, Spain, Germany, France, and Italy) the percentage of foreign players had never exceeded ten percent before 1985 (Poli, Ravanel, & Besson, 2016). However, from 1985 onward, that amount has continuously grown. Between the 1995/96 season (the last year before the Bosman ruling came into effect) and the 2000/01 season the amount of foreign players increased from 18.6% to 35.6%. The rate of change has slowed, but the total amount of foreign players has still continued to increase. During the 2015/16 season, foreign players made up 46.7% of players in the big five leagues and 47.7% across all of Europe.

As of the start of 2016/17 season, across the big five leagues, England leads the way with 61.8% of its players being foreign born, followed by Italy (56.2%), Germany (46.8%), Spain (40%), and France (30.5%). Importantly, it is not only the rich soccer leagues of Europe that use foreign players. Cyprus (65.4%) Turkey (62%), Belgium

(60%), Portugal (53.5%), and Scotland (50.5%) all use over 50% foreign players (Poli, Ravenel, & Besson, 2016b). The rest of the world also shows signs of player movement across borders. The North American Major League Soccer currently uses 48.5% foreign players, and the leagues in Mexico (34.1%), Chile (26.4%), Qatar (36.6%), Australia (30.6%), and China (22.1%) all maintain over 20% foreign players (Poli, Ravenel, & Besson, 2016a). It is interesting to note that the country that uses the lowest amount of foreign players is Brazil, at 6.1%. This is particularly interesting when considering that Brazil, while known for its affinity towards soccer, also has the seventh highest average salary for players (Harris, 2014).

The ethnoscape of global soccer's labor does not end with players. It is useful to include the other sectors involved in the production of soccer culture—those involved in the manufacture of equipment and apparel. This also ties into the financescape, as will be discussed below. However, when considering the international labor involved in the global sports industry one can consider the foreign born workers used in the construction of stadia for mega-events, such as the case of Qatar 2022 (Rossingh, 2016). Here thousands of migrants have travelled to Qatar to live in otherwise inhumane conditions to build the necessary infrastructure for the Middle Eastern country that will soon host the World Cup.

### **Tourists**

While the movement of bodies across borders to labor in the sporting cultural field is a particularly visible aspect of soccer's ethnoscape, it is also important to point out the role that tourism and the movement of tourists plays as well. Mega-events in soccer such as the World Cup, the UEFA Euro, and the Copa America Centenario all

play important roles in the movement of bodies around the world, and this includes not just players but also tourists. Of course, mega-events in sport generally have long played a role in cross-cultural interactions. From their earliest start as international expos, the mega events that would develop into the Olympics, the World Cup, and various other regional tournaments have always existed under the guise of internationalization (Roche, 2002). Even though from their beginnings the events have had a commercial underpinning, the earliest of these events were still promoted as ways to engage with culture from around the world (despite how problematic it may have been). Nevertheless, the mega-events of the late 20th and early 21st century have doubled down on efforts to operate as tourist attractions and have largely succeeded in doing so.

Take for example the case of Brazil. In 2014, the Latin American country hosted the World Cup in 12 different cities, and they attracted record numbers of international visitors. While Brazil has already invested in tourism and regularly sustains impressive numbers, 2014 was the first time the country recorded over six million international visitors (Armstrong, 2015). Moreover, the role that the World Cup tournament played in facilitating the movement of tourists was evident, as the number of tourists tripled in June (the beginning of the tournament). The amount of visitors jumped 350,000 in 2013 to over 1 million in 2014 (Armstrong, 2015).

Other mega-events such as the Copa America and the UEFA Euro are similar in their function to that of the World Cup, albeit on a smaller scale. The regional tournaments are played out in the Americas and Europe, respectively. Rogers (2016), notes that it is estimated over 10% of Iceland's 330,000-person population traveled to France to support their team. Similarly, the fans of both Northern Ireland and the

Republic of Ireland were covered throughout the news media as prime examples of respectful and fun international sports tourists. The Copa America tournament, held across the United States, also saw a large influx of tourists from the countries of Latin America.

The movement of tourists around the world in support of soccer is not restricted to the mega-events. The mega-events certainly build on a symbolic battle that results in international sporting dominance and the increased pride of a sporting nation, but it is important to point out that tourists also travel for league matches. According to the official tourism website for the United Kingdom, [visitbritain.com](http://visitbritain.com), forty percent of all visitors to Britain watch some sort of live sport during their visit. Of that forty percent who watch sport while visiting, nearly three-quarters of them watch soccer ([visitbritain.com](http://visitbritain.com), 2015). These matches are not nearly as tied to the imagined community of the nation as the mega-events are, but instead reflect the appeal of the brand of the football clubs. The arrival of tourists in search of soccer is particularly evident at the well-known and successful clubs—especially when they play each other. In Spain, for example, where soccer tourism also exists, the matches between Real Madrid and Barcelona (known as El Clasico) are regularly overrun by foreign tourists who are consuming the match as a cultural commodity, with no necessary appreciation for the history or local meaning of the game (Minder, 2014). These matches are particularly relevant as the two teams are led by two of the best players in the world at the sport, and are both teams are supremely successful domestically and globally.

## **Migration/Locals**

A third area of consideration when discussing soccer's ethnoscape is the movement of people from their place of origin to new lands, not necessarily in search of sport (as is the case with labor and tourism). Rather, this perspective considers how soccer either travels with people or how soccer binds people through their shared experience in new lands. Soccer is the most popular sport throughout much of the world, so it is less likely that someone discovers soccer upon migrating to Europe than it is for someone who might discover rugby by moving to South Africa or Australia. Nevertheless, the movement of refugees and workers around the world allows for the attachment of sport to flow with them. This could be the case with local sport affiliations that thus move beyond the borders with the movement of club-loyal migrants.

This is particularly evident of diasporic groups in the American context. Within the US there are numerous migrant groups and along with those groups are the sports that they bring. It is not uncommon to see people from the Caribbean and South Asia playing or watching cricket, those from Latin America and Europe watching and playing Soccer, and those from Oceania playing and watching rugby. These observations reinforce a point raised in the previous chapter: previous studies demonstrate the importance of media and culture in diasporic populations (Karim, 2003; Mattelart, 2011). Moreover, sport has been specifically implicated in the maintenance of cultural identity both in relation to internal migration (Kraszewski, 2008) and for global migration (Stodolska & Tainsky, 2015).

The flow of people in relation to global sport begins the mapping of the global nature of sport. People move around the globe in various ways in relation to sport.

Whether it is through labor, tourism, or unrelated migration, people and sport move around the world together. These flows of people allow sport to move across an endless and ever changing ethnoscape. This ethnoscape is the first of the scapes that constitute the globalization of culture. Although the movement and connection of people is important, the other scapes help demonstrate the global nature of soccer.

### **Global Soccer's Financescape**

The global financescape of soccer consists of the various ways in which money moves across borders in relation to the global game. The financescape is undoubtedly complex, but a basic way to start is via a description of transnational nature of the ownership of league teams. Although various models of ownership do exist, what appears to be the dominant trend across the world is a move toward transnational and private ownership, where clubs are owned through a network of international actors and the social ownership models are slowly being phased out.

#### **Ownership**

Ownership structures of teams vary across spaces with some countries having stronger rules or traditions regarding private and/or foreign ownership than others. In Spain, for example, there is a long history of social ownership of clubs. Social ownership refers to the community ownership of clubs, in the form of membership association. This prevents clubs from being sold to outsiders. Through the “socio” model, members vote on the club president and theoretically participate in the democratic policy making procedures involved in the governance of the club. These traditions in Spain are still evident today in some of the top teams, including Real Madrid, Athletic Bilbao, and FC

Barcelona. Nevertheless, in 1992 a policy change in Spain forced clubs to turn private unless they are able to prove their financial success, which the aforementioned clubs continue to do. Although the former UEFA president, Michel Platini, has praised the socio model of ownership, there is concern in the European Commission that the restrictions on ownership may violate EU free trade laws (Corrigan, 2013). Germany too has a tradition of social ownership, known as the 50+1 rule, which forces teams to be majority owned by members of the sporting association. This does however open up space for foreign investment, but theoretically leaves the control of the team with the association members (Evans, 2013).

In England, however, the privatization of clubs began in the early twentieth century, which replaced social ownership as the primary ownership system. The private ownership model has since allowed for foreign investment and eventually foreign control of many of England's top-tier clubs, as well as a few of the lower tiered clubs. A close look at the ownership of the clubs shows how ownership comes from all parts of the world. For example, some of the most successful clubs in the EPL are foreign owned. Although many of the teams see ownership from across the globe, there is also a strong influence of Americanization and consolidation, as these owners tend to own large parts of other sports franchises. Arsenal is owned by American businessperson Stan Kroenke: his company, Kroenke Sports Enterprises, also owns an NBA team (the Denver Nuggets), NHL (Colorado Avalanche), and NFL (the Los Angeles Rams). Liverpool FC is owned by the American-based Fenway Sports Group (the same group that owns the Boston Red Sox, New England Sports Network, and a 50% share of Roush Fenway Racing). Manchester United is currently controlled by the American-based Glazer family, through



their holding company First Allied, which also owns the Tampa Bay Buccaneers of the NFL. Sunderland A.F.C. is owned by American businessperson Ellis Short, and Swansea City is majority owned by two Americans, Stephen Kaplan and Jason Levien. Kaplan has minority share of the NBA's Memphis Grizzlies and Levien is a shareholder in the MLS' DC United Franchise. Other parts of the world are also represented via EPL ownership. The Srivaddhanaprabha family from Thailand and their King Power holding company own 2016 league champions Leicester City FC, Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich famously owns Chelsea FC, and Manchester City is part of City Football Group, a holding company based in Abu Dhabi, that also owns teams in Melbourne, Australia, Yokohama, Japan, and New York City. As of 2015, 28 clubs across the top four divisions in England were strongly controlled by foreign investors, including nine in the top-tier Premier League.

The EPL is not the only league that has substantial foreign ownership. In Ligue 1 of France, the current champion, Paris Saint-Germain, is owned by Qatar Sport Investment group; the most successful team from France—Olympique de Marseille—was recently purchased by Frank McCourt, the American businessperson who formerly owned the Los Angeles Dodgers; the Monaco-based team, AS Monaco, which plays in the French league, is owned by an investment group led by Russian billionaire Dmitry Rybolovlev, and OGC Nice was recently acquired by a consortium of Chinese and American businessmen.

Across other domestic leagues foreign ownership and investment is also evident. In Italy, three top tier teams now have foreign control—Bologna FC is owned by a group of North American investors including Canadian Joey Saputo (who also owns the MLS

club Montreal Impact); FC Internazionale Milano, one of the most recognizable and storied franchises from Italy is now majority owned by International Sports Capital HK Ltd, an Indonesian consortium led by Erick Thohir; and Associazione Sportiva Roma was purchased in 2011 by a consortium of American investors led by Thomas DiBenedetto (who is also a partner in Fenway Sports Group). In Spain, Qatari sheikh Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani now owns Malaga FC and Granada FC is owned by the Italian-based Pozzo family. Even the American-based MLS has a couple of foreign owners, including English soccer superstar David Beckham (a yet to be named expansion team in Miami) and the aforementioned City Football Group (NYCFC), led by Mansour bin Zayed bin Sultan bin Zayed bin Khalifa Al Nahyan of the United Arab Emirates.

### **Sponsors**

A second important component of soccer's global financescape is sponsorship. Sponsorships play an increasingly significant role in sport. When considering the financescape of soccer, sponsorships work in multiple ways. Many clubs now earn money from global capital via their associations with transnational corporations. This will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Mega-events like the World Cup and the Copa America Centenario are also of course part of the global financescape. Mega-events are not the primary focus of this dissertation, but it is important to also point out the role that global capital plays in these events. The FIFA World Cup, for example, has a complex sponsorship structure that consists of Global Partners at the top tier and regional partners at a lower tier. Since the World Cup takes place in various countries, sponsors can be from the host nation, but more often than not, those sponsoring the mega-event are from a foreign country. Jersey

manufacturers also factor into the equation in mega-events the same way they do at the league level, the only real difference is that national team jerseys do not have official sponsors across the front of them.

While these examples of jersey and stadium sponsorship begin to illustrate the complexity of the global financescape, it surely does not end there, including official vehicles of clubs, official beverages, and financial entities, as discussed in more detail in the next chapter. However, the financescape also moves beyond just the ownership and sponsorship of clubs. One area that is often forgotten in regards to the financescape is the movement of money across borders in support of the game—that is, through the major global sports equipment corporations: Nike, Adidas, Reebok, and Puma.

### **Sport Goods and Apparel**

Adidas is the official ball supplier to the World Cup tournament, while Nike is the official supplier of balls for the English Premier League, the Italian Serie A, and Spanish La Liga. Nike is an American-based multinational corporation; however, its production of soccer balls, and other sports related equipment including shoes, cleats, jerseys, and shorts, takes place in various locations. Having come under scrutiny after an article published in *Life Magazine* showed photos of a 12-year-old Pakistani boy sewing soccer balls (Schanberg, 1996), and has been described as a brand with a major disconnect between its empowering advertising and its exploitative outsourced production (Klein, 2010). Nike has reportedly worked at cleaning up its issues related to child labor. Nevertheless, the sportswear giant still employs labor from around the world where they can maximize profits, even if done according to local legal frameworks. Adidas similarly uses cheap overseas labor to produce its equipment. The official ball for the 2014 World

Cup was manufactured in Pakistan after Adidas pulled out of plans to manufacture the ball in China, as it would ultimately cost less to pay the 1800 Pakistani workers a \$107 monthly salary. These two examples show how the complexity of the global financescape moves beyond just the origin of the corporations involved in the production of sport, but also how those corporations are in and of themselves part of a global financescape.

These three categories of soccer's financescape—ownership, sponsorship, and manufacturing—help document the complexity of the global financescape around the cultural production of sport. Leagues exist in specific places, but are owned and supported by an increasingly complex flow of global capital. This combined with the complexity of the ethnoscape starts to illustrate the interconnectedness of the various scapes of globalization.

### **Global Soccer's Technoscape**

According to Appadurai (1996), the technoscape is the global makeup of technology, including high and low as well as mechanical and informational technology that allows people, money, images, and ideas to move around the world and across borders. Thus, it is important to consider the technoscape in relation to the other “scapes” as the technoscape in many ways enables and supports the other scapes.

The first aspect of the technoscape that is necessary to consider is the technology of information—media—as it allows for the flow of messages, symbols, and ideas around the world. The technoscape of information is made up of various components. Although historically, newspaper and radio played an important role in the early globalization of soccer, it was arguably television and the development of satellite communications that

furthered the process. Satellite communication made it possible for matches to be transmitted from anywhere to anywhere in the matter of seconds. The advent of satellite communications coupled with an expanding telecommunications infrastructure allowed for the development of nearly endless channels that could cover anything from food to sport. Of course, one of the key developments here is the rise of the 24-hour sports network ESPN (Vogan, 2015) and the subsequent copy cats NBC Sports and Fox Sports one.

While satellite communications and expanded television capabilities aided in the globalization of soccer, the rise of internet-based communications is the latest addition to soccer's global technoscape. The internet has radically altered the way culture flows across spaces. For example, it now relatively easy for many people around the world to stream matches to their personal computers or mobile phones, regardless of their physical location (Hutchins & Rowe, 2009). Moreover, people can easily seek out communities online where they can interact with other fans, read news about teams, and produce their own content related to soccer. Importantly, internet-based communication also provides another avenue through which the corporations that own and disseminate sport can extract surplus value. Thus, the technoscape simultaneously spreads soccer culture around the world, but allows for an increased commodification of culture.

A second realm of the technoscape that should be addressed is what Appadurai refers to as mechanical or low technology. As this applies to the globalization of soccer, one must consider the enhanced means of transportation. Soccer has become increasingly global, not only in terms of its mediated distribution and consumption, but also in terms of the game play: the technology of transportation allows for more matches to played

nearly anywhere in the world. For example, over the course of a typical EPL season, four teams will play in various rounds of the Champions League Tournament—a season long tournament that is comprised of teams from all across Europe. Increased means of transportation allows players to participate in EPL matches on Saturday or Sunday, and then fly to various parts of Europe for Matches on Tuesday or Wednesday of any given week. Such modern transportation also allows for the global distribution of material products as well as symbolic. Thus, the technoscape of global soccer goes beyond the simple reduction of TVs in every house, but is largely dependent on a complex web of technology spread around the world. Importantly, the technoscape directly relates to the proliferation of images and stories around the world—the mediascape.

### **Global Soccer's Mediascape**

The global soccer mediascape is perhaps the most complex of the scapes through which the globalization of soccer is evident. First we must acknowledge the already interconnected relationships between sport, media and culture—the previously discussed sport media cultural complex. This concept “encompasses all the media and sports organizations, processes, personnel, services, products and texts which combine in the creation of the broad and dynamic field of contemporary sports culture” (Miller et al., 2001, p.131). Various scholars including David Rowe (2003b), Lawrence Wenner (1998) and Sut Jhally (1989) point out the interconnected relationships between sport, media and culture. These scholars argue that media and sport operate synergistically where mediasport texts help produce culture, and culture produces mediasport texts. Media are necessary for the production, economic viability, and global spread of sport. Mediasport

texts then construct ideas about class, sexuality, race, nation, celebrity, gender/sex, ability, and other markers of identity and inequality. It is through the global mediascape that these messages and images are now available globally.

The global mediascape is directly related to the global technoscape. After all, it is through the technologies of communication that the mediascape exists. Appadurai (1996) explains that the mediascape is both “the distribution of electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information (newspapers, magazines, television stations and film production studios)...and to the images of the world created by these media” (p. 330). Moreover, he explains that mediascapes “tend to be image-centered, narrative-based accounts of strips of reality” (p. 331). Thus, the global soccer mediascape begins with the flow of images around the world, facilitated largely by the aforementioned technoscape.

The flow of images is, importantly, supported by a global infrastructure of largely for-profit corporate media conglomerates. Using the EPL as an example, one can see how complex the flow of soccer around the world is. In the United Kingdom, the EPL matches are split between the for-profit cable channels Sky Sports and BT Sports. However, BBC also airs highlight packages throughout the week to reach customers that do not have access to pay television. In the US, EPL matches are carried across the NBC family of networks, including NBC, NBC Sports Network, and USA Network. The UEFA Champions League and FA Cup matches are telecast on Fox Sports 1. In Canada, EPL matches are split between SportsNet and TSN; Australian company OPTUS carries the EPL matches on internet and mobile channels, and is actively involved in the development of a dedicated EPL channel. In France, the matches are made available on TV, Internet and Mobile via Altice Telecommunications. The German digital company

Perform Group carries the matches to Germany, Austria, and Liechtenstein. In addition, in Spain, Moviestar, the subscription-based channel, has exclusive rights to carry matches. Many other parts of the world are served via regional networks including the Middle East, where beIN sports has English and Arabic coverage; in the Caribbean, matches are carried by Flow Sports. In Sub Saharan Africa, most countries are served by SuperSports, on free-to-air basis. This list could go on to cover nearly every country in the world, it becomes clear, with just this short example that a complex web of media organizations facilitates the flow of media content around the world.

This only addresses the global flow of one league around the world, one can imagine the complexity when the Spanish La Liga, the German Bundesliga and other national leagues factor into the global flow of messages. Moreover, international tournaments such as the UEFA Champions League, the UEFA Euro, or the FIFA World Cup are often times carried by completely separate corporate entities that have independent deals to carry the highly prized spectacles. However, the mediascape does not end at the airing of matches or tournaments. The mediascape is comprised of all the images and messages related to the sport. Highlight packages and features are commonplace within the narratives related to global soccer; these narratives can highlight specific players or specific places and help develop imagined geographies.

As soccer is now an explicitly commercial enterprise, the economic support role of advertising and sponsorship undoubtedly factors into the composition of the mediascape. Advertising messages during telecasts featuring globally recognizable team brands such as Manchester United circulate the globe, and superstar players such as Paul Pogba, are the global faces of many companies—including sports companies such as



Nike and Adidas. However, a plethora of other brands, including the sponsorship of Manchester United star Wayne Rooney by South Korean electronics giant Samsung, or as is the case with Manchester City star Sergio Agüero's sponsorship by Pepsi and Gillette are evident. These sponsorships and subsequent advertisements naturally flow beyond the confines of the location where these superstars play their matches. For example, global superstars Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo, who both play in the Spanish La Liga, are circulated around the world including the United States.

The mediascape also extends beyond the legacy media into the various forms of emerging digital media. The increasing access to internet and mobile-based communications around allows for the increased spread of messages around the world. Dedicated apps and news sites proliferate for specific leagues, global soccer news, tabloids, and fan based chat rooms (Pegoraro, 2010). As the world is increasingly interconnected via digital technologies, a soccer fan in Dubai can access any number of soccer related images and messages through their mobile phone or personal media device. They can stay up to date on the latest news, they can produce content related to their favorite teams or players, they can purchase any number of digital subscriptions for access to a variety of leagues, and they can follow their favorite players via social media.

Digital gaming is also an important area for the flow of images around the world. EA Sports, the Premier League's lead partner, produces a wildly popular video game that is played around the world via any number of console and mobile based gaming platforms. As such, gamers from around the world interact with each other and further the complexity of the global flow of soccer culture.

While this complex web of media allows for the proliferation of messages from around the world, including matches, highlight shows, imagined geographies and endless advertisements, those images are not neutral in their meaning. The mediascape is inextricably connected to the ideoscape, which is the global flow of ideology connected to soccer.

### **Global Soccer's Ideoscape**

The ideoscape, according to Appadurai, is “also concatenations of images, but they are often directly political and frequently have to do with the ideologies of states and the counter-ideologies of movements explicitly oriented to capturing state power or a piece of it” (Appadurai, 1996, p. 331). While Appadurai’s conceptualization of the ideoscape links it to state production of ideology, I believe that the ideoscape is broader, especially in a globalized world that exists 25 years after Appadurai first developed the concept. Thus, the ideoscape is best understood as being comprised of the big ideas that flow around the world. For some, connecting the ideoscape to global soccer might seem like an unnecessary or even impossible task; however, as the previous four “scapes” have shown, the globalization of soccer is expansive, highly complex, and necessarily embedded with ideology.

Ideology can be found throughout soccer in various ways. It would be nearly impossible to list and describe the complexity of all ideological messages that flow with soccer. However, it is useful to point out some dominant ideology attached to the proliferation of global soccer. Perhaps most importantly is the relationship of soccer to the ideology of capitalism. Sport in general can be said to promote the ethos of

capitalism—work hard and you should succeed. It is common to hear stories about athletes succeeding because of their hard work, despite various structural elements that may have limited others. In other words, success in sport is usually associated with one's own effort.

However, other ideas can be attached to soccer and flow around the world as the game expands. Many clubs, for example, have various ideas attached to them. Celtic is associated with Irish Catholic immigrants in Scotland, FC Barcelona is representative of Basque nationalism, and Saint Pauli FC is considered the anti-corporate club. In the case of these clubs, the ideas become attached to the clubs and are often times symbolically spread. Celtic for example flies the Irish flag over its stadium during matches and FC Barcelona uses colors and a badge that is evocative of the Catalonia flag. Moreover, the official language of FC Barcelona is Catalan, not Spanish.

While some ideologies are connected to clubs and organizations that run global soccer, the people who make up the game also produce ideas, which I believe can be seen at times as counter ideologies. For example, during the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, the project of neoliberalism was apparent, but the citizens of Brazil also created counter discourses through the various acts of protest surrounding the event. The ideoscape, then, is complex and consists of many ideas that flow along with the movement of the sport across space. Importantly, the ideoscape connects in multiple ways with the other “scapes” in that the flow of people, money, and media all aid in the flow of ideologies around the world.

## **Conclusion**

Globalization presents a never-ending web of complex processes that occur all around the world. In addition, it has been suggested that to understand globalization at the cultural level we must consider the five separate, but related, flows that make up culture (Appadurai, 1996). Through describing the ethnoscape, financescape, technoscape, mediascape, and ideoscape of global soccer, I have established the relationship between globalization and soccer. The global flow of soccer cannot be reduced to a single understanding of global flows of people or images; rather, it is both people and images, along with money, technology, and ideas.

Through mapping out the complexity of soccer's globalization, one can now see how the popular soccer teams, such as Manchester United or FC Barcelona, now operate as global brands. One needs to only consider the five scapes in direct relation to any one club to understand the global nature of clubs. Importantly, this allows clubs to exist as global brands that are nearly removed from historic place-based identities.

Soccer, along with most cultural products, historically developed with strong relationships to places. However, despite the fact that spatial anchors are often times built into the names of the clubs, these clubs are a complex mix of global distribution and branding with a local situatedness. Through the globalization of soccer, these clubs are no longer strongly associated with place, especially when considering the televisual nature of the sport. No longer do clubs rely simply on gate receipts for revenue. This allows clubs to pursue profits elsewhere, and in doing so, allows clubs to change their relationship to places.

These changing relationships to places are important as people still actively draw associations between place and sport. As the flow of soccer continues to expand around the globe, what associations do people make? What does it mean to support a club from London, especially if that club from London only has a superficial connection to London? To address these questions, I must first demonstrate the relationship between soccer clubs and place, and how the globalization of soccer clubs is fundamentally changing those historic place-based relationships. Thus, the next chapter approaches these questions and analyzes the changing relationships between clubs and places, specifically relying on a framework that analyzes the commodification of English soccer and the changing relations between place and club brands in the era of globalization.

## Chapter 3

### Building the Global Brand

The relationship between sport fandom and various forms of identity has long been studied. Much has been written about sport and the symbolism and meaning of national identities, but increasingly there has been an emphasis on regionalism, localism and class/race-based identities in relation to sport. For example, it has been argued that FC Barcelona has historically been a symbolic entity for Catalan nationalism (Shobe, 2008), Spartak Moscow was the people's team—in opposition to the authoritarian state-run teams in Soviet Russia (Edelman, 2009)—and Glasgow Celtic represents Irish and Scottish Catholics against their protestant rivals the Glasgow Rangers. Importantly, these processes work at the level below the national, as sport is perhaps more historically attached to the local (city or region) rather than the national.

As Kraszewski (2008) documents, sports fandom allows, “displaced populations to negotiate home and home identities” (p. 140). Kraszewski here is working through an understanding of internal migration throughout the United States in relation to the changing industrial landscape across the country. Drawing on Lash & Urry's (1987) argument that the increase in service-based industry has eroded traditional forms of community and subsequently working-class identities, Kraszewski analyzes the way that displaced industrial workers from Pittsburgh maintained their place and class identities through their fandom and viewing of the Pittsburgh Steelers football team. Kraszewski situates his study within the context of a “[American] football bar” which allows people who migrated from Western Pennsylvania to the Dallas-Fort Worth area of Texas, an

opportunity to interact with others from their displaced community. In this specific case, people from Western Pennsylvania left their home region in search of new economic opportunities in Northern Texas, and they were able to maintain their affiliation with “home” through their viewing of the Pittsburgh Steelers and interactions with other Pittsburgh fans, especially within the context of the bar in Fort Worth, Texas. A key element that stands out through Kraszewski’s work is the way that sports teams develop and discursively create linkages to locally focused community institutions like bars and other viewing venues, and how people may enact associations of sports teams to places, even as they move away from those places.

Importantly, the relationship between clubs and places change over time, especially as clubs respond to the processes of globalization and the makeup of places change. As was developed in the previous chapter, globalization has affected soccer and has resulted in top European clubs that are arguably now more *global* than they are local, particularly when viewed through the application of the five scapes of globalization. But, what does this mean for the orientation of the club to that of the local? Does the club still represent the people and places that it purports to represent? As fans around the world are cheering on teams and symbolically representing places through their fan attachments, what do those attachments suggest? As clubs are now more global than local, what communities do they actually serve?

The changing relationships between clubs and places, then, needs to be analyzed. As such, this chapter adds another layer to the analysis of globalization and sport, and specifically analyzes how major clubs from Europe have historically developed into global brands and what those transformations mean for the relationship between the club

and its spatial anchor, and how those global brands have been sold in the US market. Accordingly, this chapter begins with a historic overview of how the English Premier League has expanded globally. I then review the ways in which major clubs were commercialized and transformed into global brands. This chapter then builds an argument that extends on the previous chapter, and suggests that as club brands have become global in nature, the relationship with the local has eroded, resulting in a club that is, in many ways, no longer a community-focused organization. Rather, most clubs are simply transnational corporations that use the currency of place to market a global brand and an array of symbolic material. This chapter will end with a detailed analysis of how one brand, The English Premier League, has attempted to localize its brand in the United States, specifically via its use of selling British culture, rather than adapting the brand to the local American market.

### **From Local to Global**

Debates about soccer's origin take place regularly, with some suggesting the game's history belongs to indigenous peoples in central and south America (Galeano, 1995), the Roman empire (McIntosh, 1987), and the Chinese (Walvin, 2000). Others point to the various folk versions of the game dating back to the 8<sup>th</sup> century in parts of the United Kingdom (Henderson, 2001). However, through his thorough history of soccer, Bill Murray (1998), convincingly argues that the official code through which soccer is currently governed came out of a particular time and place—the middle of the nineteenth century in the industrialized cities of England. Industrialization led to drastic changes in social organization including the development of the English public school system and



the recreation that took place alongside it. In the public schools, soccer grew out of rugby and the “alumni of the English public schools not only gave the world the rules of association football; they also fostered the spirit in which they hoped it would be played, that of an amateur game unsullied by material reward” (Murray, 1996, p. 5). As an official soccer code developed and teams formed throughout England and Scotland, tours around Europe and the Americas started and the game began to move beyond the confines of the British middle class.

Applying their taxonomy of globalization, sociologists Richard Giulianotti and Roland Robertson (2007), call this the incipient phase of soccer globalization, characterized by the incorporation of residual folk culture into the state-organized public school system to dissipate the “rebellious, violent, and sexual energies of pupils and to inculcate new masculine norms centered on leadership obedience, hygiene and Christianity, as encapsulated in the sporting myth of fair play” (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2009, p. 6). Rules were developed by social elites that led to the founding of the Football Association in London. As rules were adopted, rugby and soccer became two separate games. In various places around the world, the rules of “football” were debated and later localized—Aussie rules were codified in Melbourne and rugby-style rules were generally adopted in the United States (which eventually led to the development of American-style football).

As the game started to transcend the borders of the British Isles, it was the countries closest to Britain commercially, economically, and culturally that first took to soccer. In South America, Argentina and Uruguay were the first to pick up the game. In Europe, it was first Switzerland and Denmark, followed by Belgium, the Netherlands,

Scandinavia, Germany and France (Murray, 1996). However, even though the flow of soccer began to reach beyond the shores of the British Isles, the people originally playing those games were still largely British. Both Murray (1996) and soccer historian David Goldblatt (2014) explain that those people who played soccer in the early diffusion of the game were British expatriates and students. For example, in France, soccer first developed in the Channel Ports and the universities of Paris (with English students); in Germany, it was the trading regions along the North Sea, Hamburg, and Berlin; places where commercial travelers regularly visited.

Eventually, the game spread beyond the British nationals and was picked up by local people in various countries. However, Murray (1996) still argues that tensions often arose between the desire to play and the desire to resist British hegemony of the times; this led some Italians, French, and Germans to consider rugby as more definitively British and thus satisfy their souls under the assumption that they were being patriotic by playing soccer rather than the quintessential English middle-class game of rugby.

The expansion of the game from the British Isles to other parts of Europe and the Americas not only spread the game itself across borders and to non-Britons, but it also changed the nature of the sport. Professionalism, not initially part of the code, was adopted throughout much of the world in the early diffusion of the game. Murray (1996) explains that as capitalism expanded and wealth increased during the years following World War I, workers saw nothing wrong with earning money while playing sport, moving the game further from the elite amateurism of its British origins. This would ultimately create conflict between socialists and capitalists with the former claiming sport labor to be a form of exploitation and accusing teams who charged spectators of

bourgeois profiteering. Eventually, professionalism would become the standard with only the communist countries of Eastern Europe and England holding onto the ideas of amateurism. Giulianotti and Robertson (2009) call this the take-off phase of soccer globalization. They see the processes of urbanization, industrialization, and international flows of labor as integral components to this stage of soccer globalization.

During the next phase of soccer globalization different locations started to develop the game in ways that reflected local cultural practices and the politics of the time. For example, as fascism took hold in Europe and new communication technologies allowed for the production of state-produced nationalism, soccer became integral in the public pedagogy of citizenship and nationalism to many places. In Spain, for example, Franco famously used the extremely successful team Real Madrid to promote his fascist ideology and Castilian centrism. In Italy, Mussolini used the success of Italian national team at the World Cup as a way to promote Italian fascism. Interestingly, while certain teams promoted fascist ideologies, other teams resisted—as was the case with Athletic Bilbao and FC Barcelona in Spain. World War II understandably saw the sport fade from the public eye for a short time, but the post-war years throughout the 1960s saw the revival of soccer and the proliferation of national team powers around the world. Brazil, Argentina, and Uruguay all represented Latin America as formidable opponents to the hegemony of European soccer power, and with international soccer success, the global awareness of international soccer stars such as Alfredo DiStefano and Pele became commonplace.

According to Giulianotti and Robertson's taxonomy, this struggle-for-hegemony phase is characterized by the commercialization and increased professionalization of the

sport. Through the advancement of international governing bodies such as FIFA and changes to the international rulebook, soccer became a commercialized product. The commercialization of soccer has subsequently resulted in both a for-profit orientation of the game and an increased relationship with media industries, advertising and branding. With such commercialization, both clubs and players started to gain international support. This would ultimately result in the movement of players from the global south to the global north—a practice that still happens today.

Giulianotti and Robertson point to a subsequent phase—uncertainty—that saw the intensification of commercialization solidified by the neoliberal push to deregulation of the 1980s and 1990s. This resulted in the consolidation of sports leagues, large media deals for top tier clubs, the proliferation of the global tournaments such as the FIFA World Cup, and increased transnational flows of culture and labor. Leagues such as the English Premier League, Spain's La Liga, and Germany's Bundesliga all started expanding business beyond their borders at alarming rates; following the neoliberal logics that have led to capital investment in Asian and African markets, so too have soccer leagues started to expand across borders in search of never-ending profits from developing markets.

It is through these last three phases of soccer globalization that the relationship with global media has become increasingly important. Murray (1996) points out the role that radio played in nation building through sport, but Goldblatt (2014) and (Roche, 2002) both argue that television broadcasting and subsequently the development of satellite communications has had a profound effect on the dissemination, popularity, and commercialization of the game globally. Currently, media deals are taking place to bring

matches to new locations around the world. A massive project by both La Liga and the EPL developed to expand into Asian markets and capitalize on the perceived *need* by those nations for European soccer. Moreover, the EPL, the Bundesliga, and La Liga have all recently reached deals with various American media companies in attempts to expand into the otherwise resistant (but growing) American soccer market. Given that this dissertation focuses on the viewing in the US of English soccer, the next section gives a brief history of the political economy of English soccer its complex ties to shifting influences of commerce and media technology, and ends with a focus on the business mechanisms of most visible UK club, Manchester United.

### **The Commodification and Commercialization of English Soccer**

Soccer has existed in England for hundreds of years. However, the game's governing body—the Football Association—was officially developed in 1863 when representatives from the public schools came together to codify the rules (Sondaal, 2013; Murray, 1996). Importantly, as the game grew in popularity it did so through its appeal to working-class fans, local businesspersons and politicians. The game attracted fans because it was relatively inexpensive and it resembled many of the folk games that people played before moving to industrial cities, businesspersons were eager to make money on the newly developing relations between working class people and leisure, and politicians sought popularity via association with winning local clubs (Sondaal, 2013). In other words, the early popularity of clubs was directly tied to the places where the clubs existed and had strong ties to local neighborhoods or cities. Accordingly, as clubs were established throughout the mid to late-nineteenth century, they were developed as locally

focused sociocultural, political, and economic institutions that were, for much of their existence, run like public service institutions that drew upon and represented local culture (Miller, 2013). However, clubs today operate in fundamentally different ways than they did when they were founded.

For most of the twentieth century, strict regulations, such as a maximum wage for players, quotas on foreign players, and limits on the payment of dividends were in place that ultimately prevented clubs from pursuing a strictly for-profit business model (Sondaal, 2013). While the majority of clubs were still depending on gate receipts in the early 1980s (Giulianotti, 2005), the expanded commercialization of the game that developed through the 1980s and early 1990s changed the business model of soccer. According to Giulianotti (2005), although various factors slowed the entry of clubs as publicly traded corporations on the stock market—most notably the declining popularity across Europe, failed attempts by some clubs that left them near liquidation, and the desire of owners to maintain complete control of clubs that had historically been operated as less risky ventures—they nevertheless persisted and have been treated as transnational corporations ripe for investment.

The combination of economic, technological, and political developments in the early years of neoliberalism changed the game's business model, which diversified its earning ability. Throughout the 1980s, many clubs began employing brand marketing and merchandising strategies in order to maximize their profits and keep up with competitors (Giulianotti, 2005). Luxury boxes were built into many stadiums to appeal to corporate investors and those willing to pay for them, in-stadium advertisements were redesigned, shirt sponsorships were developed, and manufacturing sponsorships with sportswear

companies were employed. However, the most important aspect of the game's commodification relates to the changing relationship with television.

This relationship between English soccer and television dates back to 1937, when the FA cup final between Sunderland and Preston North End was broadcast across the UK. However, the role of television was ultimately limited until the 1960s, as clubs routinely prohibited cameras on their grounds due to the fear of declining spectators and gate receipts, which at the time was the clubs' primary source of income (Walvin, 1975). While the broadcast of live games was still nearly nonexistent, an agreement in 1964 between the BBC and the Football League allowed the broadcast of extended highlights (Sondaal, 2013). Therefore as television audiences were growing, the majority of viewers were watching the highlight package called Match of the Day on the BBC rather than live matches broadcast across a number of channels. Importantly, the £5,000 paid by the BBC to Football League was divided equally between all 92 teams (Sondaal, 2013).

However, by the 1980s Margaret Thatcher had gained power in the UK and was opposed to the concept of public service broadcasting model of the BBC as it was considered antithetical to free-market principles (King, 1998). New deals were being negotiated that would take advantage of the technological and political changes of the time—satellite television and a single European market (Sondaal, 2013). By 1983, live English matches were broadcast for a fee of £2.6 million (Szymanski & Smith, 1997). Moreover, a 1985 tragedy at a match between Liverpool FC and the Italian Juventus left 39 spectators dead and immediately resulted in a ban of English teams in international competition, leaving a need for more televised matches across the growing and deregulated English market, in order to make up for revenue losses (Giulianotti, 2005).

This led to the rise of televised league matches from teams that would later be referred to as the “Big 5”: Everton, Liverpool, Arsenal, Tottenham, and Manchester United. The Big 5 clubs were the most popular around England, and had more television exposure, which allowed them to earn substantially more money from in-stadium advertisements (as they would be seen through televised matches) and other commercialization and merchandising efforts.

In 1991, the top clubs across England decided to join an FA-controlled breakaway league that would split the television money between the top clubs, rather than the 92 clubs across the lower leagues. Therefore, while lower tier clubs had benefited equally from television money previously, the development of the Premier League substantially limited the earning power of small clubs, even more than a lack of exposure did concerning advertising revenue.

The landmark media deal for the newly created Premier League in 1992-1993 guaranteed the teams 304 million pounds over five years. The new deal incorporated the satellite television station BSkyB, which featured 60 live matches (up to 138 matches in 2006). BSkyB paid 191.5 million pounds for their share of the matches, while the BBC paid 22.5 million pounds, and another 90 million pounds coming from sponsorship and overseas television rights. While the Football League had remained unchanged since 1888, the combination of Thatcher’s deregulation policies, growing television ownership, and developments in satellite television, resulted in broadcasting revenues for the Premier League to grow at an annual rate of 27% since the 91/92 season and broke the 1 billion pounds threshold in 2009/10 (Harris, 2009).



As Sky Television began carrying more matches, the European Commission was concerned about competition of coverage which opened the door for Setanta, an Irish satellite station that made matches available to around the UK, Ireland, and eventually to the United States (Miller, 2013). Setanta won the rights to two of the six broadcasting packages offered by the EPL, which would mean that Setanta would have the opportunity to broadcast 42 matches a season between 2007 and 2010. However, in 2009, Setanta missed a 30 million pound payment to the Premier League for its television rights and both ESPN and News Corp stepped in to acquire the rights. A deal was negotiated in which ESPN picked up Setanta's rights in the UK and News Corp gained control of the US rights. The Setanta Sports channel (which had shown soccer matches in the US) was then rebranded to Fox Soccer Plus. The newly created channel operated as a counterpart to its already established Fox Soccer channel where EPL matches have been shown periodically and on tape delay for nearly two decades. ESPN gained rights to broadcast in the UK and also sublicensed matches from FOX to show across its family of networks in the US. However, in 2012 the Premier League rejected a joint bid by Fox and ESPN in favor of NBC. NBC acquired the English Premier League rights for a three-year period starting in 2013, for which it paid \$250 million. The NBC deal came after Comcast gained majority control of NBC and consolidated its networks forming NBC Sports Network along the way. Between its flagship stations NBC, the rebranded NBC Sports Network, USA, CNBC and its streaming properties, as well as Spanish language stations MUN2 and Telemundo, NBC gained had the rights to all 380 regular season matches (Baxter, 2013).

Over its first year of coverage, NBC aired all 380 matches (through both its family of networks and a special add-on package available by subscription). The move to NBC resulted in record-breaking viewership numbers. After the first year of the NBC deal, 31.5 million Americans watched Premier League coverage—more than doubling the 13.3 million that tuned in to FOX and ESPN. Moreover, on Championship Sunday (the final day of the season), 4.9 million fans watched matches—up 172% from the previous year on FOX, and, NBC averaged 438,000 viewers a week, nearly doubling the amount of viewers on FOX. This initial success of the NBC deal resulted in a massive extension that brings the EPL to the United States through at least 2022. The six-year deal cost NBC \$1 billion, illustrating the network's faith in the growing fan base in the US. While overseas television rights to the EPL were originally a minimal portion of revenue for the expanding league, and, in 2000 they only accounted for 10% of the Premier League's TV money, by 2010 international rights accounted for 40% of all television earnings ("The untouchables," 2011). Starting in 2016, international rights will be nearly half of all television revenue for the EPL, earning 1 billion pounds per year—more than all the TV money earned by the remaining big four leagues in Europe (Italy, Spain, France, and Germany) combined (Harris, 2015).

The move from public service to commercial organizations has resulted in drastic changes to the revenue for clubs around the world. Over the course of the past five seasons (2012/13-2016/17), average club revenues have risen from £126 Million to £216 Million. Broadcast revenues are still the largest contributor to the financial viability of the EPL as a whole, and have continued to grow, accounting for 47% of revenue during the 2012/13 season, and a projected 60% of total revenue during the 2016/17 season

(“Annual Review,” 2016). The broadcast revenue structure for the EPL distributes money equally amongst teams, regardless of the size of their television markets. Broadcast money for the EPL comes from two sources, domestic and international television rights. Of all the television money earned by the EPL broadcast deals, 50% of domestic earnings and 100% of overseas money is evenly distributed between the teams. The other 50% of domestic broadcast revenues is further divided up. Half of this (25% of all domestic broadcast revenue) is used as reward money for distribution across the league depending on the final standings of clubs (i.e., reward money for first-place team is higher than reward money for last-place team). The other half (25% of all domestic broadcast revenue) is used as a bonus for clubs, called a facility fee, who have live matches throughout the UK. Each team that has a match aired live earns an extra £750,000. In 2015/16, when Manchester United was featured in 25 live matches, they earned an extra £18.7 million. Accordingly, during the 2016/17 season, the range of income teams will likely earn from projected broadcast revenue ranges from £146 million for the league champions and £97 million for the last-place team.

Between the 2012/13 and 2016/17 seasons, “commercial” revenue, including sponsorships, merchandise, and licensing, across the EPL has averaged 29% of revenue across all teams, with the remaining revenue coming from match-day income (such as gate receipts). Importantly, commercial revenue is a significant source of income for many clubs, especially the global giants in the Premier League, such as Manchester United.

During the 2014/15 season, Manchester United played matches in both the English Premier League and the international tournament, the UEFA Champions League.

Accordingly, Manchester United earned a total of £395 million in revenue. The money from the aforementioned Premier League broadcast structure earned Manchester United £92 million, and extra broadcast revenue from the club's participation in the UEFA Champions League earned an extra £15 million. However, Manchester United earned £201 million from commercial revenue, more than all other revenue sources combined, equating for 51% of total revenue (Deloitte, 2016). Between the 2005/6 season and the most recent 2015/16 season, Manchester United's total revenue increased from £165 million to £515 million, with commercial revenue increasing from 28% of total revenue in 2005/6 to 52% in 2015/16 ("Business Model," 2017).

Commercial revenue for clubs such as Manchester United comes from a variety of sources. This of course starts with income from sponsorship. According to Manchester United's Business Model website, the club attempts to "monetize the value of [its] global brand and community of followers through marketing and sponsorship relationship with leading international and regional companies around the globe" ("Business Strategy," 2017). This effort resulted in a structured sponsorship system developing global, regional, and product segmentation sponsorship strategy. During fiscal year 2016, Manchester United announced six global sponsorship partnerships, five regional sponsorship partnerships and three financial services and telecom agreements. Sponsorship for Manchester United increased from £135.8 million in 2014, to £160.1 million in 2016. One of the most valuable sponsorships for all clubs are for the kits in which teams play all their matches. Kit sponsorships provide two distinct revenue streams. The first and most obvious is the money that teams earn from organizations that seek to advertise on the front of their shirts. The American-based auto manufacturer Chevrolet now has its

famous bowtie iconography emblazoned across the chests of one of the most storied and popular soccer clubs around the world at a price of \$560 million over seven years (Baxter, 2014). Sportswear companies will also pay various amounts to teams depending on market research to be the official kit manufacturer. Manchester United currently has the largest such deal with kit manufacturer Adidas, which is now the official sportswear company of Manchester United, after a £750 million, 10-year deal (“Business Strategy”, 2017).

Manchester United has other prominent partnerships including one with Twentieth Century FOX, which featured star players in a promotional trailer for the blockbuster superhero movie *Deadpool* (Communications, 2016b); and with Uber, the rideshare transportation company. About the latter, Manchester United announced at the beginning of 2017 a global partnership which will bring Manchester United content to Uber riders around the world (“Manchester United announce new partnership deal with Uber,” 2017). There is even bedding tie-ins: MLILY is the now the official mattress supplier for Manchester United and will be installed throughout the Manchester United training complex (Communications, 2016a).

Another aspect that is often tied into sponsors is the naming rights of the stadium. In the case of Manchester United, the naming rights to Old Trafford have not yet been sold, but many clubs do sell the rights. As is the case with both Arsenal FC and Manchester City FC, the naming rights to the stadium were bundled with the sponsorship rights on the jersey. Thus, Arsenal play their matches in jerseys manufactured by sportswear company Puma, with “Fly Emirates” across their chests, and play their home matches in Emirates Stadium. Similarly, Manchester City has “Etihad Airways” on the

front of its Nike manufactured jerseys, and the home matches are played in Etihad Stadium.

In an attempt to capitalize on the global popularity of soccer, nearly all popular and successful teams now have lucrative international sponsorships. As of this writing, the Spanish based club Real Madrid is sponsored by Emirates Airways in kits manufactured by Adidas; Barcelona FC is sponsored by Qatar Airways on the front of its Nike kits and Intel inside their kits<sup>1</sup>; Chelsea is sponsored by the Japanese-based Yokohama Tyres; Everton is sponsored by the Thai-based Chang Beer; Bayer Leverkusen is sponsored by the Korean electronics manufacturer LG; Paris Saint-Germain and AC Milan are both sponsored by Emirati-based Emirates airways; Olympique Marseille is sponsored by the Swiss sporting goods retailer Intersport; the Italian champions, Juventus is sponsored by the auto manufacturer Jeep (American-based, but currently operates as wholly owned subsidiary of the Italian Fiat corporation); and the North London-based Tottenham Hotspur is currently sponsored by Chinese life insurance company AIA.

Another significant component to commercial revenue for EPL clubs is retail, merchandising, apparel and product licensing with Manchester United logos. According to Manchester United's business plan, they "market and sell sports apparel, training and leisurewear, and other clothing featuring the Manchester United brand on a global basis" ("Business Model," 2017). Additionally, the club sells other licensed products from coffee mugs to bedspreads, all of which are sold through Manchester United-branded

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<sup>1</sup> Intel purchased the rights to the underside of Barcelona's shirt, so that when players lift their shirts in celebration, as is often the case, the Intel logo would be shown to the millions of fans watching.

retail centers and e-commerce platforms, as well as official partner's wholesale distribution channels. While Nike had previously handled all of Manchester United's apparel and product licensing, that relationship ended in 2015, and is now handled by Adidas. Accordingly, retail and merchandise revenue for Manchester United rose from £31.6 million in 2015 to £97.3 million in 2016, equating to 36% of commercial revenue for the club.

Lastly, Manchester United earned £10.9 million for the 2015/16 year from mobile telecom and media content distribution deals ("Business Model", 2017). One such way that Manchester United capitalizes on media content is through its website and television channel. The club now has complete ownership of the subscription based MUTV—which was originally started as a three-way partnership with BSkyB and ITV—it distributes content globally via its international telecom partnerships, and has a significant fan base across various platforms of social media, including 72 million followers on Facebook, and 17 million followers on Instagram.

Such dynamics have not just generated capital for the sport, or even just concentrated economic influence into a few clubs or corporations, but have also changed the relationship of the sport to location and place. The next section explores this dynamic.

### **Branding, Soccer, and Place**

As deregulated television resulted in massive increases in revenue for clubs, the prospect of cashing in drew increased attention from international investors. When Egyptian businessperson Mohamed Al Fayed bought the London-based club Fulham FC

in 1997, it was the first time a foreigner owned an English Premier League club (Sondaal, 2013). Since then, the ownership and labor makeup of teams has become increasingly international, along with the market from which investors are seeking to extract wealth. These changes in ownership, labor, and distribution resulted in a fundamentally different relationship between clubs and places. In other words, as David Whitson (1998), puts it

In the early days of spectator sport, teams were largely composed of local men, and operated under the auspices of clubs that acted as organizers of ethnic, class, or town affiliations. Together these phenomena contributed to a popular sense that teams were community institutions and that their performance reflected the characters of the communities they represented...However, as the potential for making money from the staging of sporting entertainment became clearer, and as cities themselves grew and changed, these community associations and meanings would be abraded and transformed by the logic of the marketplace. By the late twentieth century, although professional sports operators routinely appeal to civic (and national) sentiments when it suits their commercial purposes, the languages of communal tradition and loyalties are increasingly supplanted by corporate images and by the discourse of consumer choice (pp. 59-60).

With a market-based approach to club management, cross-branding strategies developed that attached the club name to just about anything that could be sold—beer, alcohol, home goods, clothing, and personal electronics were some of the first. Moreover, relationships with banks, credit cards, and vacation firms had special consumer packages



for club supporters (Giulianotti, 2005). Through the extension of the club name across various products, the clubs developed into brands that would exist as a signifier that could be attached to any product to facilitate a consumer desire. This switch of clubs into brands proved to be financially beneficial, especially for those who invested early when clubs were struggling. For example, as Aston Villa FC became a valuable brand, owner Doug Ellis turned an initial investment of £500,000 into £50 million (Sloane, 1997). Although the commodification and commercialization proved beneficial to owners, the process of turning clubs into brands has ultimately changed the meanings of the clubs, particularly in terms of the club's relationship to place, especially the local as a spatial anchor.

Urry (2003) suggests that brands operate globally, flowing across the world in a “super-territorial” manner, which then develops into a “global media of exchange” (Edensor & Millington, 2008, p.175). As the images that constitute brands move around the world, the meaning of the brand will change depending on who is wearing it, or when and where it is used. Therefore, while the world continues to connect through the various scapes, the brand operates in a way that is open to interpretation where it can be “reterritorialized, appropriated, and transformed in unpredictable fashion” (Edensor & Millington, 2008, p.175). This movement of brands around the world is directly attached to the economy of signs produced by “marketing, design, sponsorship, public relations, and advertising expenditure” (Urry, 2003, p. 67).

Importantly, turning a product into a brand allows the product to be conceptualized via constructed artificial associations, such as signifiers of wealth, the mainstream, or notions of being “cool.” Rather than thinking about the product via its

material or functional properties, the brand sells “a way of life, an attitude, a set of values, a look, an idea” (Klein, 2010, p.23). As such, Edensor & Millington (2008) point out that:

brands cannot generate meanings to which people will subscribe regardless, but must tap into broader sensations, desires, opinions and identities, often aligning themselves with mythical notions produced by the popular cultural forms such as films, pop music, television programmes and novels (p. 176).

In other words, as brands begin to flow across space, they must tap into pre-existing cultural “myth markets” (Holt, 2006, p. 374).

One such way global brands adapt to local contexts is through the process of corporate nationalism. As Jackson (2004) explains, corporate nationalism is “the process by which corporations (both local and global) use the currency of ‘the nation’, that is, its symbols, images, stereotypes, collective identities and memories as part of their overall branding strategy” (p. 20). Jackson specifically analyzes the case sportswear company Adidas entering the New Zealand market, and doing so through its attachment to the wildly popular national rugby team, the New Zealand All Blacks. This process allowed Adidas to affiliate itself with feelings toward the All Blacks team thus building brand association between the All Blacks, Adidas and therefore New Zealand.

While sportswear companies often seek to brand themselves in relation to the success of clubs, corporate soccer clubs themselves also engage in a process that is similar to corporate nationalism, through their association with cities and regions. This of course rests on the understanding that elite-level soccer clubs are transnational

corporations that are ultimately selling a brand rather than seeing clubs local institutions serving a community. Through their attempt to associate with the currency of the local, the club brand is built around myths about that commodified location. For example, as top global clubs such as FC Barcelona, Liverpool FC and Manchester United have expanded around the world, they do so, in part, by selling their brands as something that represent both the national and the local, and therefore the embedded culture and politics of Barcelona, Liverpool and Manchester respectively.

This is perhaps best illustrated by the efforts of the Spanish-based club FC Barcelona. Historically, the club has been situated in opposition to that of the Madrid-based Real Madrid CF. While both teams are extremely successful, both domestically and internationally, the clubs have in ways represented various political understandings of Spain, throughout the twentieth century, with Real Madrid representing Castilian Spain, and FC Barcelona representing the resistant Catalonia region. FC Barcelona's famous club motto "Més que un club", Catalan for "More than a club," suggests that the Spanish league club is actually a representative of Catalonia and the Catalan culture of the region. Nevertheless, the club is commercialized in similar ways to the aforementioned Manchester United, ranked as the third most valuable sports franchise in the world in 2016. Thus, it is perhaps important to ask; in what ways does this team currently represent Catalonia. Even though FC Barcelona sells itself as representative of the Catalonia region and wildly supported by many Catalans, it generally operates as a transnational corporation that seeks to profit via global domination.

As top clubs across Europe continue to globalize in efforts to build corporate value, the process ultimately alienates them from the communities to which they purport

to serve. Although many of the clubs are built around preconceived notions of a relationship to a strong place identity, the rising ticket prices, the increasing corporate hospitality, and decreased relationship with community values ultimately situates the club as an institution that is only connected to local via the location of its headquarters and the stories that they tell.

Thus, as clubs were originally founded through close ties to the local, many now exist in a way that separates them so much so, that they now operate as placeless entities. In some ways, this disengagement with place is something characteristic of corporate brands generally. Consider, for example, a sportswear company such as Nike. Although it is headquartered in Beaverton, Oregon, in the United States, there is very little about the corporation, outside of its branding efforts, that serves either the national or the local level. The same basic dynamic then can be said about the majority of transnational clubs that make up the major clubs across Europe.

Sport is often spatially anchored through the club names that include geographic markers and the location of the home stadium, however, the associations to place are now more superficial or constructed through branding strategy than rooted in the local experience of the geographic name attached to the club. The centrifugal pull of global markets and corporate partnerships, then, complicates the relationship of team to place. This produces the global club, rather than the local club that is doing business globally. As the EPL and other European leagues are now doing business globally, and fans around the world support any number of clubs, what they are supporting in a branded product version of a corporate soccer team; a team that no longer has an attachment to the places from whence they came. Nevertheless, through their global expansion, many leagues and

clubs are selling themselves as somehow authentically attached to places. This is particularly the case as the EPL has attempted to expand into the US market. The next section will examine this process in further detail.

### **Welcome to America**

The growing popularity of European-based soccer clubs across the US is now evident in both the viewership numbers from matches shown on NBC (“NBC Sports Group,” 2016) and through public displays of fandom. When the 2015/16 season ended in May 2016, NBC had, for three years in a row, broken soccer viewership numbers in the United States. In 2014, a match played between the English Premier League club team, Manchester United, and the Spanish La Liga club team, Real Madrid, was held at Michigan Stadium, which housed nearly 110,000 people (Harris, 2014). Similarly, matches between Liverpool F.C. and Manchester City F.C. at Yankee Stadium in New York, New York, and Liverpool F.C. vs Manchester United F.C. in Miami, FL, took place in front of near sellout crowds of more than 50,000 people (“Liverpool v Man City,” 2014). Even though the matches were played as, “friendlies” or what Americans call “exhibition games”, they nevertheless drew massive crowds across the United States—signifying that, perhaps, global soccer is here to stay. Thus, it is important to consider how European soccer is being sold and localized throughout the American sportscape.

### **Going on Tour**

According to branding literature, the process of building a global brand with foreign customers is particularly difficult for sports teams, as the brand itself is often built

around the local myths and histories of places. According to Hill & Vincent (2006), this has posed a challenge for many transnational clubs as they seek to take advantage of the growing global market. The availability of matches on television each week can help establish customer interest in a team, however, the viewers likely do not gain the same sense of relationship to the brand without seeing the teams and being part of the winning and losing experience that locality can bring. To overcome these barriers in building global brands, many teams have started engaging in global promotional tours. For example, the EPL started the Premier League Asia Trophy, which is an international tournament held every two years in various Asian and Oceanic nations. Similarly, in the US, the International Champions Cup (ICC) takes place each summer. The ICC was originally developed to promote the European clubs across the United States but has since expanded into Asia and Oceania as well. The promotional tours feature many of the top-level clubs across the various European leagues, including Manchester United, Liverpool, Manchester City, Real Madrid, and Barcelona.

These promotional tours are unsurprisingly dedicated to markets that have the most perceived value for the expanding leagues. Many teams from the Spanish leagues play matches on the West Coast where Latino fans outnumber non-Hispanic white fans. In addition, the English Premier League teams regularly play at a variety of cities scattered across the Midwest and Northeast—the strongest markets for the EPL (NBC, 2014). The promotional tool of playing matches across the United States (and other territories) thus allows the brands to extend the excitement of watching matches and seeing the action live, which is considered an integral component when building a global brand. Importantly, although these tournaments often times do not feature superstar

players who might be away on international service for their national teams, or are recovering from the demands long seasons, the effect of 110,000 fans collectively engaging in the ritual participation of soccer likely helps establish fans' own myths and understandings of the game. When I attended a match during the summer of 2015, the fans were as rowdy and good natured as any other sporting event I have attended, and the matches were played as they were on European soil, not at all appearing as though it was simply a promotional event. The players gave it their all, the fans cheered relentlessly (even using the chants and songs normally heard in the stadiums abroad), and flags of the countries where teams originate were prominently displayed by the various fans.

These promotional tours are essentially nothing more than a game being played in a different location. However, in doing so, these tours actually operate in a ways that allow fans to redefine their understanding of the local. That is, once Liverpool played a match in New York City, they potentially became the English Premier League team associated from New York City, building a powerful nostalgic experience blending a global soccer team and an iconic sports venue. Although the original brand of Liverpool is built around nostalgic understanding of matches played at Anfield in the Merseyside neighborhood of Liverpool, playing matches in Yankee Stadium in New York City allows those fans to have moments through which they can then construct their own nostalgic understandings of matches and teams, albeit in a different location. When Liverpool beat Manchester City in a penalty shootout, fans are able to take that memory with them forever and construct nostalgic understanding of the brand in a new place. This, then, allows brands such as Liverpool and Manchester United to extend their global reach and acquire new fans.

Live matches between European clubs are an important strategy to build interest in the brand throughout the United States. However, what some EPL clubs have begun doing is playing matches with MLS clubs, in an attempt to reach fans who are interested in soccer, but are not familiar with European teams. When London-based Tottenham Hotspur sold Robbie Keane to the Los Angeles Galaxy, a friendly between the two sides was included as part of the deal, Tottenham also used its sale of Jermain Defoe to Toronto FC to establish a relationship with Toronto fans, as the deal required Toronto FC to sell Tottenham memorabilia. Similarly, in 2014, Arsenal FC, which was playing in the US for the first time in 25 years, played a match against Major League Soccer club, the New York Red Bulls, whose star player at the time was former Arsenal star Thierry Henry.

While live matches are the dominant component of the promotional tours, many teams now use the tours as an opportunity to activate local sponsorships and build fan interest through increased marketing and public relations activity. In the case of Arsenal, players from the club premiered Arsenal's new Puma manufactured kit at Puma's flagship store in New York City. Moreover, when clubs tour throughout the United States, many of them also host soccer clinics and charity events, and meet with official supports clubs throughout the US, in an attempt to build a larger fan base, particularly throughout the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast where the brand has the most potential.

These promotional tours allow the brand to gain exposure in new territories and give fans the ability to make their own real and nostalgic associations. This allows the Liverpool fan in the United States to create his own understanding of Liverpool's fan culture, which needs not adhere to the established culture of Liverpool fans in the UK,



effectively allowing the new fans to appropriate the symbols and myths as they wish to. Although this is seemingly an innocuous effect of the global branding strategies of clubs, the development of new fan traditions allows communities, which are not directly related to the club, to change the meaning of a club that is still symbolically related to a specific place.

### **Selling Cultural Difference**

Although many companies develop global branding strategies that focus on adapting brands and products for local markets (a strategy known as global localization (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2004)), the EPL explicitly promotes itself as a signifier of cultural difference. That is, the EPL has attempted to operate in the US market via selling itself as authentically English and thus distinctly not American.

This is most prominently exemplified via the 2013 promotional campaign developed by The Brooklyn Brothers advertising agency and Maxus Global (Nudd, 2013)—which was commissioned by NBC in support of its first season as the American television rights holder to the EPL, in order to generate mass appeal for English soccer in the US. To do just that, The Brooklyn Brothers agency developed a promotional campaign and phased it in three tiers. The first tier consisted of telling current EPL fans that the matches would now be shown on NBC Sports and affiliated media properties, as they moved from ESPN where they had been previously.

The second phase of the campaign was “Engaging fans with real heart for football, but no vested interest in the Premier League, by inviting them to ‘Keep Calm and Pick a Side’. Giving them a ‘way in’ to the conversation” (Brooklyn Brothers, 2013). Here the promotional campaign staged a massive “takeover” of New York City, the

country's largest media market. This started with a massive billboard, measuring 5,472 square feet, that extended around the corner of a building on 48th street and Broadway in Times Square featuring, at the time, Tottenham superstar Gareth Bale (Botta, 2013). Bale was featured prominently in a white Tottenham jersey, with the Under Armor logo and HP sponsorship easily seen, his arms outstretched and his face displaying the emotion of someone who had just scored an important goal. Above the Tottenham player was a smaller sign (although still quite large), that read, "Premier League is coming to NBC SPORTS August 17th" and featured the logos of NBC and NBC Sports Network. Adjacent to that sign was yet again another smaller sign that read "Every Match. Every Team. Every Week", and featured the Premier League logo from 2013. In August 2013, the Billboard was changed from Gareth Bale to original artwork by British street artist D\*Face<sup>2</sup>. The new piece featured a hand painted mural of a soccer ball exploding through a wall, with the words "Don't Call It Soccer. It's football... just not as you know it." The other two billboards remained the same.

Other aspects of the New York City promotional "takeover" included MTA subway trains being wrapped in artwork featuring two rival EPL clubs per car, with messages instructing riders to "Keep Calm and Pick Man City" or "Keep Calm and Pick Man United". Other teams featured on trains were Everton/Liverpool and Arsenal/Tottenham. Other transportation-based ads were displayed on real British taxis (rented from collectors in the US), wrapped in artwork from various clubs and featuring the same messages "Keep Calm and Pick New Castle United" etc. and that the upcoming season would be telecast on NBC Sports. Further artwork featured at bus stops included

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<sup>2</sup> Gareth Bale was sold to Spanish league team Real Madrid at the beginning of the 2013/14 season, and thus no longer represented English Soccer.

maps of New York City with EPL clubs assigned to various boroughs and neighborhoods through the club name and colors being superimposed on a map, with the words “Keep Calm and Pick A Side” in the lower right corner. All 20 premier league clubs were featured on the map promotion. Many of the clubs were situated along neighborhood lines in Manhattan, including Chelsea FC, which was assigned to the Financial District and Battery Park. Arsenal FC was assigned to the West Village and Tottenham Hotspur in the East Village, perhaps to perpetuate the rivalry between clubs. Manchester United was assigned to the Upper East Side and Liverpool to the Upper West Side, while Manchester City was assigned to Midtown and Times Square.

The “pick a side” phase of the campaign also featured a digital media component where fans could see detailed team profile videos, full of famous fans, quirky traditions, and important information about the clubs across various social media. An interactive feature on NBC Sports website and a smartphone app allowed fans assigned new fans a team based on their Facebook profile. If fans were not originally satisfied with the club suggested via their available Facebook information, they were also able to answer a short series of questions regarding arbitrary tastes about music and movies, or color preferences. Fans were then suggested a club based on a matching of the questions and various arbitrary facts about a particular club, as was the case when I was told that I should support Manchester City, because the lead singer of the band Oasis supports Manchester City. Certainly, this process of suggesting clubs to fans is not perfect, but it does give new fans a way to interact with the twenty premier league clubs, and learn about different team histories and cultures through the in depth team pages.

The third phase of the EPL campaign was to “convert die-hard American sports fans...in terms the fans would understand” (Brooklyn Brothers, 2013). A key component of the third phase for the EPL campaign was a five-minute promotional comedic web-film titled, *An American Coach in London*, featuring former Saturday Night Live cast member Jason Sudeikis. The web-film was made available in full length on YouTube and embedded on various websites including NBC Sports Network; and the web-film was cut down into TV ad spots that were used heavily across NBC’s family of networks, especially during sports broadcasts and during the 2014 Olympic Games.

Sudeikis stars as Ted Lasso, an energetic and enthusiastic American football coach who has moved to London to take charge of Tottenham Hotspur FC. The template for the web-film was the typical *60 Minutes* segment, with sit-down interviews as the primary material, and footage from training and a press conference mixed in, to show how the new coach attempts to understand a foreign game. Coach Lasso is stylized in a way that is reminiscent of famous American football coach Mike Ditka (who won the NFL Super Bowl in 1985 with the Chicago Bears); during training scenes, Lasso wears mid-thigh length blue shorts, a white polo shirt, aviator sunglasses, and a whistle around his neck. During interview scenes and press conference, he wears a blue sweater over a crisp white button-up shirt. Lasso also has his hair combed to the side and a thick mustache (something that Coach Ditka is quite famous for). When Lasso first speaks, the audience hears him introduce himself to someone on the other end of a telephone call. With a noticeable Texan accent Lasso says, “Hey, how ya doin? This is Ted Lasso, I’m the new head coach of the *Tottenham Hotspurs* and uh, I’d like to speak to the queen please.”

The web-film operates comically as Coach Lasso tries to make sense of the differences between the two games and two countries. Throughout the web-film, Sudeikis masterfully highlights the popular stereotypes of both Americans and American perceptions of the UK. A confused Coach Lasso attempts to comprehend soccer's version of offside, at first yelling at the line judge in the way an American football coach might yell at a referee: "Will you explain to me how that's offside?" Coach Lasso then softens his tone and says, "No, I'm asking you, seriously can explain offside to me, it makes no sense." Coach Lasso is also amused by soccer tackling, and the fact that there are no playoffs but there are ties, stating, "If you tried to end a game in a tie in the United States, heck that might be listed in Revelation as the cause for the apocalypse."

Throughout the five-minute film, Coach Lasso also draws comparisons between popular EPL clubs to well-known American sports teams. Using a flashcard exercise, Lasso's assistant holds up a card with Manchester United's crest, and says, "Manchester United. Super rich. Everyone either loves them or hates them." Lasso then responds "Dallas Cowboys." The assistant then holds up a Liverpool card, "Liverpool. Used to great but haven't won a title in a really long time." Lasso responds, "Also, Dallas Cowboys."

In such ways, one potential market for this promotional film is the new soccer fan. The film thus operates as a soccer literacy video for the otherwise uninformed American public. By using Coach Lasso as the cultural sojourner, American viewers are able to watch a funny video but also have a chance to learn about some finer details of the global game, and understand some of the simple differences that make the game what it is.

Lasso, though, also represents the blustery stereotypical American football fan in his ethnocentrism about sports; he is likely uneducated and uninterested in soccer and in fact uninterested in nearly anything outside of mainstream American culture. Coach Lasso's shows his disdain of the non-American "football" by declaring the American version as the essentialist one: "football's football. You've got grass, you've got cleats, and you've got helmets with masks on them." His ignorance of the UK is illustrated when Lasso interprets being called a "wanker" as a term of endearment, saying, "I think it just means 'great.' Like, a nice guy. Kind heart." Lasso also attempts to unlock the mysteries of English geography ("Wales - wait, that's another country?" / "yes and no"/ "How many countries are in this country?" / "four"). It could be that some viewers identify with Lasso and his confusion/Americanism, but it could also be that, for others who are already soccer fans—maybe those likely to purchase and watch the EPL on NBC—Lasso represents the kind of American sports identity that those specific US soccer fans are not. They may consider themselves literate about soccer, literate about the UK, and they do care about the world outside of the US. Such fans, then, can laugh at or even be embarrassed by the ethnocentric American football-coach stereotype that Lasso represents.

Considering the entire promotional campaign, perhaps what is most interesting is the way in which campaign attempts to sell English Premier League soccer, as something that is indeed *English*. Through both the "takeover" of New York City via British symbolism and the video advertisements, the campaign promotes soccer as a form of cultural difference. That is, when the American who is interested in soccer picks a team or watches a match they are indeed doing something that is English. This approach to

brand localization is unique in that it does not attempt to integrate the brand into the current tastes of the American audience (as global localization would suggest), rather it explicitly calls out the American audience for its cross cultural ignorance, and subtly suggests that engaging with soccer (particularly the EPL) would allow Americans to engage in meaningful cross cultural activity, again, by engaging with something that is through and through English.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter provided a brief history of the commodification and commercialization of English soccer, building a conceptualization of the top soccer clubs across England (and other places throughout Europe) as a global brands. This transition to global brands has fundamentally altered the way that clubs relate to the places where they are from. Many clubs purport to be representative of something that is local in nature, but the goal of expanding into global markets has forced clubs to pay more attention to profits than to community service, and thus represent the locations they come from mostly via their constructed symbolic relationship. Moreover, while the globally marketed brand is being sold as something that represents specific places around Europe; one must ultimately question what or who is in fact being represented. As the game is increasingly commercialized and commodified by a neoliberal corporate mentality, those fans who are watching matches around the world, now including those in the United States, are supporting global brands that are fluid symbolic entities that can change meaning at any time.

While Liverpool FC has historically represented the something specifically relevant about Liverpool, and Manchester City was often considered the authentic opposition to the globally popular Manchester City (Edensor & Millington, 2008), the corporatization and global branding strategies of the clubs and the EPL effectively deterritorialize the brands and convert them into placeless entities. It is likely that Tottenham Hotspur no longer represents the minority and working class peoples of North London, at least the way it may have in the past. Rather, the brand has been hollowed out of its location-based meaning and is arguably more characterized as a corporation that operates to maximize profits where it is incentivized to privilege the global over the local. With some of the highest prices in the EPL, the north London-based club fails to be part of the Tottenham neighborhood in London. However, this does not prevent the brands from attempting to use the currency of place as a means to sell its brand globally. Places have symbolic value, especially as fans often want to associate with various places, due to powerful place brands. This is evident in the way that the EPL has successfully entered the American market via its promotional campaign, which focuses on selling the EPL as the English alternative to the American sports market.

As soccer has globalized and successfully entered the American market, fans are able to watch more soccer than ever. Through various promotional efforts, the now global brands are becoming more common throughout the American sportscape. Whether fans are watching EPL matches in the privacy of their own homes, or with other soccer fans in sports bars around the nation, fandom and viewership of the EPL and European soccer continues to develop throughout the US. However, fandom of a global cultural form is arguably a different experience than fandom of something local. Thus, when fans in the



United States are watching the available EPL matches across NBC and its streaming properties, one must ask about how fans are engaging with global soccer. How do fans interpret club meanings? How do fans understand the traditions and histories of clubs? As the meanings of clubs are arguably modified in a global marketplace, it is important to consider how those signs travel the world and how fans use them to engage with the global. When an American wears a Tottenham Hotspur jersey and actively supports the team from the sports bar, does the rivalry with Arsenal mean anything? Or, has the brand been constructed in such a way that meaning is no longer attached to place? In the next chapter, I address this issue via a detailed ethnographic analysis of soccer fans in a soccer bar.

## Chapter 4

### The Global Fans

#### Introduction

I was first exposed to the reach of global soccer, and its fans, during the 1994 FIFA World Cup. I was in my adolescence, and the final match took place in the Los Angeles metro, not far from my hometown, so it was nearly inescapable. The fans, flags, jerseys, promotions, and media coverage bombarded my life during that summer. As an American, I often feel obligated to support my country at mega-events, including the FIFA World Cup, and this was especially true when I was younger. During the 1998 tournament, I can recall rooting for the US men's national team as it lost all of its matches in the group stage. However, I was mesmerized while watching the French side that stunned the Brazilian super team on its way to winning the tournament. I was so impressed by that team that I wore a French National Team jersey for the next four years. These early interactions with the international game sparked my interest in the sport, but at the time, I still lacked an interest in the game outside of the mega-event tournaments.

But in 2001 that changed. I was a college undergraduate in Riverside, California and worked as a cook at a small family-owned Italian restaurant. My immediate supervisor, an Italian immigrant named Victor, was a rather fervent supporter of the Italian national team, and the Italian Serie-A squad, Napoli. I spent a lot of time with Victor, learning about cooking techniques, his recipes from "the old country," and other priceless bits of wisdom that a lifetime of moving around the world and working in

restaurants will teach you. Importantly, during those times we spent together, he would often speak of his love for soccer, praise his favorite players, and would curse anybody he saw supporting teams from Northern Italy, especially Internazionale, AC Milan, and Juventus. His fandom, he would go on to explain, was more than just about supporting his once-local team (from Naples); it was a proxy battle for class and ethnic relations, with such relations situated in where he was from, and now viewed from a distant country. Although he was by then living in America, Napoli still represented something about where he was from, who he was, and the relations of Southern Italians to those from the North. If someone was supporting a team from Northern Italy, Victor could not just write it off as simply fandom of a soccer team brand, rather, he saw it as a statement in the politics of Italy, particularly as support for the rich cities and elites of Northern Italy, and as disdain and racism toward those from Southern Italy.

Victor's understanding of the politics of Italy is deeply influenced by his own lived experience as a Southern Italian, who, throughout his life experienced racism and economic inequality, that is still evident between Southern and Northern Italy today. When Victor would see a person supporting Juventus (a team from Turin) or AC Milan, he would regularly berate them, swearing at them in a mix of English and Italian, and would claim that Southern Italy was the *real* Italy. Victor would often support his claims that Southern Italy was somehow more Italian than Northern Italy by drawing on the popularity of Italian food in the United States and claiming that popular Italian foods in America, such as Pizza and Spaghetti, originally came from Southern Italy.

I was also exposed to soccer through two waiters, who also worked at the restaurant, Jonathan and Mike. They were both Americans who were college students and

had travelled to Europe a couple of times. They were avid followers of the English Premier League and regularly displayed their allegiance for Manchester United. Both of them had Manchester United jerseys with different players' names on the back, and they would often speak of the overstated greatness of David Beckham, the real greatness of Ryan Giggs, and the unfortunate greatness of Michael Owen<sup>3</sup>.

They were very knowledgeable about Manchester United, its players, its history, and its rivalries. They spoke about "Man U" in much of the same way that Victor did about Napoli, and even took a trip to Manchester to see United play. Similar to the way that Victor saw Napoli as an endorsement of Southern Italy and a statement on the politics of the region, Jonathan and Mike also connected their support of Manchester United to the politics of geography, albeit in different ways. As Americans who supported United, they lacked the experience of the local, and thus made connections to the politics soccer and society in other ways, most notably, making connections between sports and the global, arguing that support for United was in opposition to American nativism that was increasingly prevalent during the early years of the Bush administration and the beginning of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Here they viewed Manchester as part of the global and through their support of the team celebrated the inclusiveness that came with it. While they failed to develop the strong disdain for other teams in the same way that Victor did, and surely supported United for many reasons beyond the politics of

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<sup>3</sup> Many fans who supported Manchester United during the David Beckham era would regularly argue that Beckham was overrated and was merely a celebrity who played on a good team. While he was indeed talented, he had shortcomings in his game, off the field issues, and routinely was in the press. The real star of Manchester United, they argued, was Ryan Giggs, who holds the record for most club appearances, and is the most decorated soccer player in history. However, Giggs was often overshadowed by Beckham's celebrity. Meanwhile, Michael Owen, who played for Liverpool between 1996 and 2004, was routinely one of the most prolific goal scorers in the Premier League, much to the dismay of Manchester United fans.

place, their fandom, it appeared, was in many ways just as real as Victor's, regardless of their place of origin and connection to city of Manchester or to the country of England.

This phenomenon, fans supporting teams of which people have no real geographic connection, is certainly not uncommon. In the American context, for example, many fans of the Boston Red Sox have never been to Boston and have no connection with the city. They support the team because they like the brand, players on the team, or perhaps, something about the politics of the place. Many fans who support the Boston Red Sox develop and embody the regional rivalry that exists between the Red Sox and the New York Yankees, again, with no actual geographic connection to the places. Similarly, Jonathan and Mike, fans of Manchester United, support a team, and the politics of place, with which they have no real experience, but do so in a way that is in fact very real to them and helps them understand and even constitute meanings not just about the teams and the places, but also about themselves.

Through the influence of the people I worked with, I eventually learned about soccer beyond the FIFA World Cup. I learned about all the great players from around the world, national leagues, different league structures, and interleague tournaments such as the European Championship. As a sports fan I found it easy to learn and talk about global soccer, albeit geographically removed from the game. However, what became clearer to me was the role that place plays in the construction of team identities, and the way that sports, fandom, politics and place can intersect. No longer was I able to support a team simply because I liked a player, the team colors, or the emblem; rather, I found it necessary to understand the politics of a club, *who* and *where* it represents, and how the people who support it understand its meaning. Teams like Napoli and FC Barcelona were

not simply clubs that played soccer on a global stage; these clubs are in fact cultural institutions that are more than just clubs that play a game. Instead, they symbolically represent the politics and culture of places. However, it should be noted that the politics and culture of places are not fixed and are increasingly contested by various groups including the team organizations, their marketers and corporate partners, and the fans themselves.

These simple anecdotes from my early life situate the purpose of this chapter. The interactions I had with various fans, both those from Europe and America, demonstrate first, the now global dispersal of fans; second, the increasing availability of European soccer in the United States; and third, the depth and complexity of sports fandom. Over the years, I had many more encounters with fans, which ultimately developed into a research interest on how the increased presence of European soccer allows spectators and fans to experience other places (even if mediated) and understand the role of place in their fandom. Building from this interest, this chapter reports the results of a more systematic examination of soccer fans in the US and their relationship to the local and global that is reflected in how they express and reflect on their fandom.

As was discussed in earlier chapters, although sports have long had ties to the production and maintenance of local and national identity, the processes of globalization have created new practices of media engagement and cultural consumption, which can in turn allow for the production of new complex, and globally constructed, identities. Giulianotti and Robertson (2004) have argued that the increased presence of sports teams across global media, available nearly anywhere in the world, has resulted in “self-invented virtual diasporas.” These are groups of fans who support sports teams regardless

of where the fan or the team is located, which leads to complex identities, regarding sport and place. Teams from top-tier soccer leagues, especially those with large media presence, are thus increasingly supported around the world in places that have no geographic connection to the location of the club, effectively allowing global fans to connect with new locations through their fandom. These globally dispersed groups of fans are an interesting aspect of the globalization of the sport-media-cultural complex (Rowe, 2004).

Building on Anderson's (1983) concept of the nation as an imagined community, sport is often implicated in facilitating the spaces and communities that can be used to make up the nation. Sport perhaps plays an even more important role in building local identity, as the processes of globalization seemingly try to homogenize the world (Bairner, 2001). Mark Groves (2011), for example, writes about the case of Bilbao, Spain and the way that sport is used to resist globalization and reproduce Basque nationalism. Similarly Goksøyr & Olstad (2002) develop a historical account of how soccer is used to express Norwegian national identity, specifically as it is used to reproduce myths and traditions through the sporting field. Many studies have been conducted, particularly in the era of globalization, to examine what the role of sport is as a form of resistance, and how it helps maintain local cultural identity when national identities are being homogenized. These studies often take place in periphery countries where elements of cultural imperialism threatens local culture and thus allows sport to save the local from the global. Even within the American context, sport can be used as a way to maintain cultural identity, especially when populations are displaced or migrate in search of work. Accordingly, studies have analyzed the ways in which sport is used by those who are

displaced to maintain a connection to “home” (Kraszewski, 2008; Aden et al., 2009) or how immigrants maintain their complex cultural identities through sport (Stodolska & Tainsky, 2015).

While studies investigating domestic sport across America are important, this chapter seeks to expand on previous research and asks about those people who have not been displaced or transplanted, but rather, those seek out global sport in search of a global experience. Thus, it is the purpose of this chapter to examine those fans who engage with the global flows of the English Premier League (and European soccer generally), in order to understand how they engage with global soccer. As Kraszewski (2008) highlighted how football bars in the Dallas-Fort Worth area has allowed displaced Pennsylvanians to maintain their place and class identities through the continued practice of sports fandom in relation to the American football team the Pittsburgh Steelers, this chapter extends his approach and asks how new fans, those with no organic connection to places or teams, experience the global through their media consumption. In doing so, I argue that fans here are using European soccer to experience the global in ways that allow them to develop consumer-based cosmopolitan and hybrid identities. While fans are engaging with clubs in search of the global, they are doing so in ways that often ignores or redefines the politics of places. Through their support of teams, many fans are engaging with places through imagined geographies that ultimately commodify places, rather than engaging with teams in ways that represent places. Thus, in search of the global, and the development of hybrid identities, many fans are developing individualized, self-oriented imagined geographies that are based on commodified and commercialized understandings of places and clubs. The fans, who watch global soccer,



while geographically removed from teams and places, are therefore central to this chapter.

## **Method**

As soccer and other cultural products are shaped by globalization, many people are developing hybrid identities through their exposure to the global, particularly through global flows of culture and cultural products. Although much of the media consumption that allows for the development of such hybrid cultures takes places in the privacy of the home, the case of sports media consumption is different, in that people often meet in sports bars and have very public displays of lived cultural hybridity. Thus, the goals of this chapter require a research method that can account for the complexity of such scenarios. Accordingly, this chapter applies the use of participant observation through an ethnographic framework to achieve the aforementioned goals.

This dissertation takes the perspective that globalization is fundamentally altering the social and cultural lives of people from various locations around the world. Importantly, however, the way that those changes manifest are not uniform across space. Therefore, in attempting to understand the lived experience of globalization, one must employ a methodological framework that allows for the nuances and complexity of investigating the local. According to Murphy & Kraidy (2003), within a research agenda on globalization, “the point of analysis should be the resulting hybrid cultures” (p. 306). Here Murphy and Kraidy evoke the work of noted anthropologist and ethnographer Clifford Geertz (1983) and argue that through studying globalization, scholars should engage “local cultural life that emerges materially and discursively as ‘tonalities’ of

global culture” (p. 306). To do so requires the use of ethnography and a commitment to field immersion and building relationships with research participants in order to understand how globalization manifests in their everyday lives.

Thus, this chapter is built around an ethnographic framework, and employed techniques adapted from Weed's (2006) ethnography of spectators of the 2002 World Cup in British pubs. Through immersion in the cultural scene, Weed was able to engage his subjects as a full participant in the pub scene. Rather than administering surveys or having formal interviews, Weed wrote down observations inconspicuously on the backs of napkins and cigarette boxes, and after time in the pub, would translate those field notes into an extensive ethnographic diary. This approach allowed Weed to interact with people in a natural spectator environment and therefore not disrupt the scene as an outsider.

In adapting Weed's methodological approach, this study also used the sports bar as the primary site of study. The Lucky Bar, in Washington D.C., served as the location of this study, because it is the market that both NBC and the EPL have identified as the strongest in the United States. It would no doubt serve the mission of this project to conduct research in multiple locations, particularly in different cities and countries, to have the most complex data possible. However, practicality has limited this research to one primary location, the popular sports bar in Washington D.C., one that was identified by various EPL clubs as the official supporters bar in the area. After receiving IRB approval, observations took place during the second half of the 2015/2016 English Premier League soccer season, between December 2015 and May 2016. Over the course of six months, I travelled to Washington D.C. on ten different weekends (starting December 12, 2015 and ending May 17, 2016), with each visit consisting of research

observations and interviews taking place on both Saturdays and Sundays according to when matches were played. On two occasions, I only collected data for a Sunday match. This resulted in 18 days of data collection in Washington D.C. The amount of time spent at the pub each day would vary, depending on what time the matches started and how many matches took place each day. On some days, I would spend roughly 8 hours in the pub, while others it would be only 2.5 hours.

Following Weed's version of participant observation, notes were taken inconspicuously on napkins, my smartphone, or in a field journal. The use of the field journal was limited, and was only used when in a private restroom to take extended field notes. After field notes were collected and the matches of the day were over, I would review my field notes at a nearby coffee shop or in the apartment in which I was staying and translate them into an ethnographic diary. Throughout the course of my study, I attempted to interact with any person or group of people who were in the bar, both employees and customers. While the owner of the bar was aware of the details of my role as a researcher and the general purpose of the project, no other person in the bar was explicitly made aware of my role or the nature of my project. However, when conversations and interviews developed, I was forthcoming about researching fans, but did not reveal the finer details of the project.

I was able to use my own fandom and knowledge of the game to gain acceptance among the various supporters groups and fans throughout the bar. To break the ice, I would approach various groups of fans, tell them that I was from out of town, was a graduate student working on a project, and was fan of soccer. I did not directly connect my role as a researcher to that of my fandom or my presence in the bar. While some

people did ask me what I was doing in Washington, many did not inquire about it and just talked about soccer or other aspects of their lives. Usually, after a few minutes of small talk, the conversation would turn to soccer, and they would then easily converse with me about various aspects of soccer and their fandom. Many of the people at the bar attend with friends or people they know through the supporters groups. Because team affiliations allow people to see you as either an in-group or outgroup member, I often attended the bar wearing a shirt that showed my support of a popular EPL team. Wearing a soccer shirt allowed for easy acceptance with both the supporters of the team to which I displayed allegiance, and from others who still saw me as an in-group member of their EPL soccer viewing community, rather than a complete outsider who has no knowledge or affiliation with soccer. Because of my fandom and my ability to speak with fans as a fan myself, I was able to move freely between groups, ask questions that were not off putting, and, based on the friendly behavior I observed towards me, gained acceptance, in a way that allowed fans to speak with me proudly, rather than guarded. After a few weeks of field study, I became known to many people in the bar, employees and fans, and many fans began to treat me as a regular in the soccer bar community, to the extent that I received multiple requests to join the supporters group of the team to which I displayed allegiance.

While participant observation was the primary method used in this study, the use of informal interviews supplemented the data. These interviews were not organized or structured, but rather, occurred via conversations in or around the pub. Notes were taken from interviews. When possible, quotes were written down immediately after a conversation, but, in order to not mark myself as an outsider, no recording devices were

regularly used.

### **Stories From the Soccer Bar**

“Ar-se-nal, Arsenal, Arsenal”—pronounced with a distinctive if not necessarily nuanced British accent—was the first chant that I heard echo throughout tightly packed spaces of The Lucky Bar when I first observed fans of the North London-based Arsenal Football Club. When I first made my way through the narrow corridor that led into the bar, I was surrounded by a sea of red, in the form of official branded jerseys, t-shirts, scarves, and winter hats. Arsenal FC’s artillery cannon-based iconography was dominantly displayed on the chests of fans nearly everywhere throughout the small soccer focused bar. Women, men, and even children showed up to support the gunners (as the team is lovingly called by its supporters), even though the match was early, the weather was poor, and the game was rather insignificant. Throughout the match, fans would cheer in support for their favorite players, when goals were scored, and anytime a scoring chance developed. They would of course curse the players of the opposing team and the officials for making what they perceived to be bad calls. The match would finish with a victory for Arsenal, and the fans in the bar rejoiced, celebrating like any sports fans would—beers were drank, high-fives were given, and songs were sung. In the space of The Lucky Bar fans regularly gather and support soccer teams from around the world, albeit, from afar, as the Lucky Bar is situated in center of Washington D.C.

The Lucky Bar is important to this story, as it is the primary site where this research takes place and the space where fans regularly come to watch European soccer. One of many British style pubs in the Washington D.C. area, The Lucky Bar has

established itself as the predominant bar for English soccer viewing in the Washington D.C. area. This is likely in part because it is the self-proclaimed oldest soccer bar in the D.C. area, and perhaps more importantly because of its relationship with the official supporters clubs of the English Premier League teams and its willingness to open early (7 AM) to cater to customers willing to watch early morning matches.

The Lucky Bar has a bit of a reputation in Washington D.C., a reputation that may not always be glowing as a upscale place to have cocktails or high-end bar cuisine, but is consistently praised for its grittiness that may actually accentuate its cultural authenticity as a bar for “true” soccer fans (even if, sometimes, that may mean alienating those who are not such big fans or expect conventional comforts). Even the negative reviews on the crowdsourcing website Yelp.com arguably enhance the bar’s authentic soccer pub reputation. For example, there are those patrons who are unhappy with the cleanliness of the establishment. Lauren D. from Washington D.C. posted about both the bar’s unpleasantness for her but also the loyalty it attracts: “One of the more horrendous establishments in the greater DC area, and yet my friends keep dragging me here. It's dirty, overcrowded and full of people I don't wish to associate with.” Michelle E. from Alexandria, Virginia, also unhappy with her experience, noted how the staff justifies it as a marker of DC authenticity: “There was a giant roach crawling on me...the bartender came over to see what was going on. We told her about the roach and she replied ‘oh, that's just the reality of urban living.’” Others are more concerned with the way the bar treats its patrons, but in ways that reinforce a particular special character. Erin H. from Columbia, Missouri explains, “I spent \$11.50 on the juke box [sic] and the bar turned it off because it did not meet their vibe.” Similarly Antonio from Washington, D.C. states,

“do not go into this establishment, I repeat do not go into this place...I was completely discriminated against, disrespected and violated for no reason at all.” Sharell J. from New York, New York tries to sum up what makes them uncomfortable, writing, “there's something off putting that I can't exactly place my finger on. It could be the weird lighting, the inattentive waitstaff [sic], or the horrible drinks and/or a combination of it all.”

But for the regular patrons of The Lucky Bar, the less-than-stellar reputation as a conventional American-style bar is part of its charm as a real and welcoming space for soccer fans. As Liz G. posted on Yelp, “Oh, Lucky Bar. At least it's reliably mediocre. Look, I love this place because they open early for my boyfriend and his crazy Premier League-watching friends, and the staff are like friends at this point.” Others praise the bar outright as a soccer bar of the highest order. Simon B. writes, “Lucky Bar has been around for years and I went there because I love English soccer. Its a fun bar, great atmosphere and good beers. The owners are terrific and they go out of their way to engage with the customers during matches.” A post from Edward R. concurs: “Lucky is, by far, the best bar in DC to watch soccer. There is an ambiance that cannot be found anywhere else.”

### **My First Day**

I first arrived for fieldwork in Washington D.C. on December 11, 2015. I drove nearly four hours from my university to reach the city, and arrived late on a Friday night. I had secured temporary lodging in Arlington, Virginia, a city that sits across the Potomac River from Washington D.C.. From the balcony of the condominium in which I was staying, I could see the bright white dome of the U.S. Capitol building, along with

numerous other notable landmarks. Washington D.C. was a desirable location for this research for many reasons—global city, diverse population, East coast, proximity to my location, access to lodging, and multiple English soccer supporters groups. The Washington D.C. area, which consists of the federal district and multiple cities across northern Virginia and Southern Maryland, has a combined population around six million people. The federal district of Washington D.C. only has a fraction of that total with 600,000 residents. Importantly, however, those living in the city are representative of the diversity of the area itself. As of 2014, Washington D.C. had over 90,000 foreign-born residents (“State Demographics Data - DC,” 2015). This is nearly a 15% increase since the year 2000. Those born in Latin America constitute the largest group of the foreign-born population at nearly 40,000 residents, and those coming from Africa, Asia, and Europe each total over 15,000 people in the city (“State Demographics Data - DC,” 2015). In the communities across Maryland and Virginia that make up the Washington metro area, there are also large numbers of foreign-born population, particularly from Asia and Latin America (“State Demographics Data - DC,” 2015). Not included in these numbers are the numerous amounts of people who live in the city or metro as first- or second-generation peoples from foreign-born parents or grandparents. Moreover, beyond its foreign-born population, Washington D.C. has a substantial Black population, making up the city’s largest demographic and nearly half the city’s 600,000-person population (Stein, 2015).

On the first Saturday morning after I arrived to start my observations, I left the apartment at 6:20 a.m. and walked 15 minutes along nearly empty streets to the Blue Line Metro station, Pentagon City, where I was to board the underground rapid transit system



that serves the Washington D.C. metropolitan area. After making my way down a long escalator and through the corridors of the metro station, I waited two minutes for the train to arrive. I was the only person in the station and the only person on the car when I boarded. Although a few people would board the train during the trip, it was nearly empty and moved quickly. After just 12 minutes on the train, I arrived at the Farragut West station, where I exited the train and station onto 18th street in Downtown Washington D.C.. Once in downtown, I walked north along 18th street passing a number of coffee shops, restaurants, and retailers, all of which were closed early on Saturday morning. I was one of only a few people walking along the sidewalks. There were just a few cars that intermittently drove through the city early on the weekend morning; however, as I approached Dupont Circle, where 18th street and Connecticut avenue merge, there was more activity, with city service crews cleaning the trash and vomit from the sidewalks, where it was left in front of the many bars in the area from the night before.

From the street, The Lucky Bar is rather unremarkable. When first visiting the location, it took me some time to locate it. Situated on Connecticut Avenue between the Dirty Martini Bar and the Midtown Lounge, The Lucky Bar blends in with its surroundings. The one exception is the green awning that extends toward the street making a covered patio for customers of the bar. There is no large sign or clear entrance; rather, the main entry is located on the side of the building through a small alley, with the front door inaccessible during the early hours. At 7:00 A.M., there are no tables on the patio, no lively activity out front, and no clear evidence of it being open for business, and without having a large sign, it was difficult to locate, particularly as a visitor to the city.

After my first visit, the large green canopy made it visible from some distance. This non-descriptive location may signal that The Lucky Bar is not for the casual bar-hopper; it is for the regulars, the insiders.

When I first walked into The Lucky Bar, early on this Saturday morning, I entered into a small room with a bar that serves as a secondary service area for when the main bar reaches capacity. The room was empty and just the televisions were on. At first I was worried that this was the extent of the bar, and that this project would be difficult to complete. However, after seeing more room toward the back of the building I made my way through the narrow corridor and up three stairs toward a bigger room decorated with national flags, soccer-themed scarves, and various other posters and artwork that regularly accompany British-style pubs. Whereas the typical American sports bar tends to be bright, open, and modern, The Lucky Bar, in contrast, is dark and traditional. The floors were dark woods that would creak when they were walked on, the seats were dark faux leather, the walls dark green, and the overhead lighting was noticeably dim. According to Paul, the owner and manager of the bar, his intention was to make the bar feel as British as possible, to give people something different from the abundance of standardized American bars in the area. This, according to Paul, starts with the decor and feel of the bar.

In the main room, I found that I was the first to arrive. Perhaps due to my eagerness of conducting fieldwork or my over preparedness to deal with the legendary D.C. travel times, I arrived 30 minutes before the first premier league match was to take place. There were two employees stocking shelves and wiping down tables getting the bar ready for the inevitable swarm of patrons throughout the day. The main room is laid

out as any typical bar would be. On one side is a large bar, featuring a central fixture of beer taps, with the handles displaying the logos of the various beers available, prominently featuring a blend of American and British brands. The bar is lined with stools for patrons to sit. Behind the bar are the bottles of liquor used for cocktails and shots. Across from the bar, on the other side of the room, are three four-person booths that line the wall, with two larger six-person booths on either end. In the open space in the middle of the room are six square tables, each with four chairs, and a large circular table, with five chairs. Opposite of the booths and adjacent to the bar side of the room is an elevated lounge area with a couch, lounge chairs and a coffee table. The back of the room offers a jukebox and a stairway that leads up to another service area (although only used during late nights) and restrooms.

The Lucky Bar, although not overly large, has 15 televisions strategically placed throughout, and a large projector that is used against the back wall. As I was the first person in the bar and had the ability to pick any space I wanted, accordingly, I positioned myself strategically in the row of booths along the wall, directly across from the main bar, with a vantage point that allowed me to see the entire bar. From where I was sitting, I could observe the main bar, the open spaces, and the entryway/front bar.

While the first Premier League match being telecast was not to start for nearly 30 minutes after I arrived, the televisions were already tuned to NBC Sports Network, with pre-match commentary and analysis taking place. As I got comfortable in the space and started documenting my surroundings, I was greeted by the owner of the bar, Paul. Paul is a Welsh immigrant who opened the bar in 1993. He is a small, bald, man, with a loud resounding voice. Full of energy at 7:00 AM, he saw my t-shirt, displaying my support to

a popular English Premier League soccer club (Manchester City Football Club), and immediately began talking about the upcoming match. Having previously spoke with Paul over the phone regarding this project, he was welcoming and was immediately interested in talking about soccer. Paul asked me questions about my fandom for Manchester City Football Club, what I thought about other clubs in the EPL, and my opinions on various bits of news throughout the soccer world. Although the conversation was welcoming, it felt as though Paul was testing me a bit, before openly accepting me into his soccer community; after all, he was aware of my role as a researcher, and was likely skeptical at first.

After briefly conversing with Paul, I ordered the “English Breakfast” and coffee, to blend into the space and support the bar. The meal arrived quickly—a plate with baked beans, wheat toast, English sausage, and two fried eggs. While I was slowly eating the breakfast, the first supporters started to show up. Two men dressed in the light blue jerseys of Manchester City walked into the bar and immediately began conversing with Paul and the other employees in The Lucky Bar. Over the next few minutes, more Manchester City fans would show up, nearly all of them affiliated with The Capital City Blues.

The Capital City Blues is the Washington D.C. area supporters group for Manchester City Football Club. It is affiliated with The Lucky Bar, where they regularly meet to watch Manchester City matches. This supporters group is one of three that is officially connected to The Lucky Bar; the other two are the newest supporters group, the Red Devils D.C. (Manchester United), and the largest supporters group, The D.C. Armoury (Arsenal FC). Supporters groups are made up of diverse populations. While

speaking with the Capital City Blues on my first day, I came into contact with members who included a Black female who worked for the U.S. Department of State, an Arab-American who works in government consulting, an immigrant from Manchester, England who works in general labor, two American college students who attended Georgetown University but were not originally from the Washington D.C. area, a near retirement male school teacher, two self-described “starving artist types,” and multiple 30-40 somethings of various ethnicities who work in various forms of private business. The other supporters groups displayed similar diversity, including the case of the D.C. Armoury which had numerous British fans who were of South Asian, African, or black British descent.

The majority of the Manchester City fans arrived in the bar shortly before the match was to start. Just before kickoff, the group president noticed my light blue t-shirt. The word City was emblazoned across my chest, stylized in the way the famous Manchester-based band, Oasis, stylized its logo.<sup>4</sup> After commenting on my t-shirt, the group invited me to sit with them at the large circular table in the center of the room. Brief introductions were made, beers were ordered, conversations ensued, and the match was watched. As the Manchester City match was coming to an end, the much more famous and more widely supported team, Manchester United, was about to start a match. Accordingly, the light blue jerseys of Manchester City that had filled the bar during that early morning match had given way to the dark red jerseys of the Manchester United supporters. While the Capital City Blues sat at the circular table in the center of the bar, the members of the Red Devils D.C. gathered toward the back of the bar to view the

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<sup>4</sup> Two members from Manchester-based popular rock band Oasis, brothers Liam and Noel Gallagher, are notable supporters of Manchester City Football Club.

match on the large projection screen. Separated by a few tables in the middle of the bar, interactions between the two groups were easily made. At that point in the season, Manchester City was leading the Premier League in points and Manchester United was struggling in the standings, something that is out of character for both clubs. As the Manchester United fans gathered, they were understandably interested in the end of the Manchester City match, which at the time was tied 1-1 with Swansea City. The Manchester United fans were eagerly cheering against their crosstown rivals, hoping for a win by the otherwise unremarkable Swansea team. The supporters groups, in good fun, began yelling playful insults across the room at each other. “Is your team even from Manchester?” yelled Vince, a supporter of Manchester City<sup>5</sup>. “Welcome to the top division” was sarcastically yelled from a Manchester United fan. Manchester City would then score the game winning goal with only seconds left. The tense Capital City Blues members exploded with joy, loudly screaming and celebrating throughout the bar. Meanwhile the Red Devils D.C. supporters quietly sat back and waited for their match to start.

Over the next six hours, fans came and went. Although the earliest match only drew a couple dozen people, the late morning and afternoon matches drew crowds approaching 100 people, some of them visible supporters, wearing branded merchandise, others just those who were interested in watching soccer matches. This would turn out to be the common rhythm of fans in the bar—depending on which teams were playing of course. The early matches would generally have between 10-20 supporters, and the later

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<sup>5</sup> This is in reference to the location of each club within Manchester. MCFB is located in the center of Manchester, whereas Manchester United is located in the borough of Old Trafford, just outside of the Manchester city limits.

matches between 30-50. Importantly, more than one match could be shown at any given time. Due to the broadcast structure of English soccer, the earliest match is usually played without any other matches being played at the same time. Most EPL matches are played in the British afternoon, which results in multiple matches being shown at the later morning or early afternoon time slots in the US (10:00 AM and 12:30 PM EST). As The Lucky Bar shows all the available EPL matches and other popular matches from the dominant European leagues, supporters of many different clubs would regularly come through the bar, supporting their teams. On my first day in the field, I observed fans of EPL teams Manchester City, Everton, Manchester United, and West Ham United, along with fans of Spanish teams Barcelona and Espanyol. However, the busiest match days would happen when all three of the supporters clubs were present, as well as fans of over popular teams such as Liverpool and Tottenham Hotspur.

### **The Stadium in the Soccer Bar**

As will be discussed in the next few sections, “place” is complicated for fans in The Lucky Bar and can include multiple components. One of these complications involves the displacement of watching a match in the bar instead of watching it live in a stadium. However, The Lucky Bar often simulates the “placeness” of a stadium.

For example, on a cool Sunday morning in the middle of January 2016, I headed toward The Lucky Bar. It had been a few weeks since I had visited so I was excited to get back to observations. This was a particularly interesting day, as Manchester United was playing Liverpool F.C. —two clubs that are among the most popular and most successful clubs around the world—so I expected that the bar would be a popular place. As I arrived at The Lucky Bar at approximately 8:30 a.m. I could hear the noise from the bar out on

the street. Many people clad in red jerseys huddled around the entrance to the bar, a Red Devils D.C. banner was hung from the green awning over the entrance to the bar, and people were drinking beer and socializing on the patio. I pushed through the crowds and entered the bar, and it became clear that the red jerseys were a mix of both Manchester United and Liverpool F.C. fans as the teams both use red as their dominant color.

I clearly underestimated the amount of people who would show up for this match, as there were no tables available, and very little standing room, even 30 minutes before kickoff. Every TV in The Lucky Bar was tuned to the NBC Sports Network where the pre-match commentary was not audible due to the roar of voices throughout the space. In the front of the Bar there were a few fans of other teams, mostly wearing Arsenal jerseys, likely waiting for the match that started later in the morning. In the main section of the bar, the fans were split between Manchester United and Liverpool, although it appeared that more people supported Manchester United. Toward the back of the main room, where the match was projected on the wall, sat a group of twelve men, who all supported Liverpool F.C. They wore classic red Liverpool jerseys and scarves, which showed multiple years' worth of wear and tear, suggesting that they were not new in their support of the team. Huddling around the table were other Liverpool fans, wearing a mix of new red jerseys and the more contemporary black Liverpool jerseys. Taking up much of the other space in the main room were Manchester United fans. The Red Devils D.C. supporters group had a banner over the main bar, and took up all of the other tables in the main room. Other Manchester United fans accompanied them and mixed in with the Liverpool F.C. fans to pack the main room at The Lucky Bar. Many of the people through the space were eating the "English Breakfast" and drinking English beer, while



waiting for the match to start.

At 9:00 a.m., approximately five minutes before the match kick off, many of the Liverpool fans stood up from their tables and mixed with the other Liverpool fans. The group laced their arms over each other's shoulders, effectively forming a symbolic human chain. At this point, the roar of voices throughout the bar faded and gave way to the collective voice of the Liverpool fans. In accordance with Liverpool F.C. tradition, the group of fans, swaying in unison, sang the lyrics to the 1963 cover of "You'll Never Walk Alone" from the Merseybeat band Gerry and the Pacemakers, mimicking the practice that occurs before every Liverpool match at Anfield (the home of Liverpool F.C.), where the Liverpool supporters sing the lyrics to the song that is now the club's official anthem. In The Lucky Bar that morning, after the song ended, the fans throughout the bar clapped loudly in approval, regardless of which team they were supporting.

This pre-match ritual, which mimics the practices of the fans in the stadium in Liverpool, is not an isolated event throughout the space of the bar. Throughout The Lucky Bar, during various matches, the fans in the soccer bar would appropriate traditions that are often performed by fans in the stadiums. Many Arsenal fans would wear club-branded scarves, which are common to see in the often-chilly stands during matches but, of course, are not needed as weather protection against the weather in the warmth of the indoor bar. After a match between Arsenal and Chelsea, where Chelsea won, a Chelsea fan walked to the jukebox and played the popular Madness song "One Step Beyond", a song that is commonly played after a Chelsea victory at Stamford Bridge. The few Chelsea supporters in The Lucky Bar sang along and danced, in accordance with the stadium tradition. During a match between Tottenham Hotspur and

Manchester City, the supporters of Tottenham Hotspur at various points throughout the match would sing the famous gospel song “When The Saints Go Marching In”, but in doing so they change the word “Saints” to “Spurs” to make the song more applicable to the club. This again is a fan practice in The Lucky Bar that mimics the fan practices of those at White Hart Lane in London.

### **Embracing Geographic Rivalries & Performing Geographic Loyalties**

“When Arsenal plays United things get crazy in here. It’s loud, tense, and just all together weird. For some reason, those fans just really show up and like watching their teams play each other”—Paul, owner of The Lucky Bar.

In the above quote, Paul is highlighting his observation that many people show up to The Lucky Bar to watch matches between teams that are either historically or currently rivals. The biggest sports rivalries are of course rooted in history and generally occur between teams that are on similar levels of competitiveness or between those teams that represent similar geographic regions. In the case of the EPL and The Lucky Bar, some of the biggest rivalries involve historically or currently storied and successful clubs, such as Liverpool F.C./Manchester United (two of the most popular and successful teams), and Arsenal/Manchester United (historically and recently very successful teams). Other rivalries, though, involve close geographic locations: Manchester City/Manchester United (called the Manchester Derby), Arsenal/Chelsea (both London-based teams), and Arsenal/Tottenham Hotspur (both North London-based teams). These rivals then manifest in the way that fans at The Lucky Bar engage in fandom. I saw this both in the powerhouse-club rivalries and the location-based rivalries.

On February 28, 2016, Manchester United F.C. played a match against Arsenal F.C. In The Lucky Bar, the fans turned out in large numbers in support of both teams and the official supporters groups of both teams were present. Large flags waving in front of The Lucky Bar showed support from the Red Devils D.C. and the D.C. Armoury. Inside the bar, fans were spatially organized according to their team affiliations. The Arsenal fans, who outnumbered the Manchester United fans roughly 2 to 1, were spread throughout the bar and took up nearly all the space in the main bar, the lounge area, and the front bar. The Manchester United fans were crammed into a small area toward the back projection screen and huddled around a group of tables pushed together. As the match was just beginning, a loud expletive aimed at the Arsenal supporters rang throughout the bar. The Manchester United fans cheered and laughed. The Arsenal fans reacted in ways that one might expect, yelling back, and eventually coming together in unison to chant and clap, “F-United, F-United, F-United”.

Throughout the match, the Manchester United fans tried to sing various songs and chants, particularly when the team was doing well or was approaching a scoring chance. However, whenever the Red Devils D.C. supporters group started to sing or chant, they were silenced by the much more prominent D.C. Armoury supporters. The Arsenal fans would also poke fun at the fact that Manchester United was not doing particularly well that season, something that is rare for the otherwise revered club, with one group of fans taunting the Manchester United faithful by chanting “David Moyes” in reference to the club’s former manager who lead Manchester United to one of its worst seasons in 2013/14.

On other occasions, The Lucky Bar was full of supporters who were interested in

watching teams during big rivalries. During derbies or matches between otherwise prominent teams, The Lucky Bar was noticeably more full of fans, and fans were more intent of performing their loyalties—wearing more branded merchandise and showing allegiance to the cities where clubs are located; although this was true when there was a big match to determine standings or between two traditional powers (as in above), it was also true about matches between geographic rivals. During a match between Arsenal and Tottenham, The Lucky Bar was full of Arsenal fans, with only a few Tottenham supporters. The D.C. Armoury supporters group was present and nearly everyone in the bar had an official Arsenal jersey or scarf on. While Arsenal supporters generally showed up to the bar in strong numbers, their presence during the “North London Derby” was nearly double what it was during any other match, even though other matches might have been more important to the outcome of the season. This signals the symbolic importance of this rivalry that is centered on local pride – although the true “localism” of this rivalry takes place 3,600 miles from The Lucky Bar. Many fans in the bar during the North London Derby were more expressive of their affiliation with Arsenal and hatred of Tottenham, vocally berating the few Tottenham supporters, particularly in terms of which team represents London more accurately. In fact, one conversation took place between Arsenal and Tottenham fans, where fans argued about which team was the true North London team. Both sides came to the same conclusion—that the team they support better represents North London, because the team (either Arsenal or Tottenham) represents ethnic diversity and working class neighborhoods, and is not focused simply on capital accumulation. James an Arsenal fan finished the argument by stating, “Arsenal is more than just a club, it's not just about money, it means something to the community.”

Similarly, during a match between Manchester City and Manchester United, fans used the crosstown rivalry as a way to argue about which team is the real Manchester team, and therefore, which fans represent Manchester. The City fans referenced the proximity of the club and the historically local focus of the club in support of their arguments, arguing that Manchester United is a global club, who is only focused on making money, particularly by finding superstars to market around the world. “Hey, let's hear it for Trafford United!” said Justin, in reference to the location of Manchester United being outside of the Manchester city limits.

The Manchester United fans, argued that *they* are the real Manchester team, primarily based on the club's historical successful record and massive global fan base. “We've won so much, we're just giving City a chance to get on the board”, said one United fan in reference to the fact that City was having a better season than United. “Look anywhere in the world and you'll find United fans. We're the most dominant team around the globe. You won't even find City fans in Manchester,” said Kevin. This statement was in reference to the regular appearance of empty seats seen in Manchester City's stadium during televised matches.

### **Picking a Team, Picking a Place**

On any given weekend during the European soccer season The Lucky Bar hosts a number of fans who support a variety of different teams. While the majority of fans come from the supporters clubs affiliated with The Lucky Bar, many fans from other teams show up to watch matches in the soccer bar environment. In doing so, one can spend a Saturday or Sunday in The Lucky Bar and meet supporters of just about any top tier team in the EPL and other popular teams from the other dominant European leagues.

Throughout this study, I interacted with fans of EPL teams Arsenal, Manchester City, Manchester United, Chelsea, Tottenham Hotspur, Everton, Liverpool, Newcastle United, Southampton, Watford, Fulham, Leicester City, and West Ham United; Spanish League teams Barcelona, Real Madrid, Sevilla, Bilbao, Athletic Club, and Espanyol; German League teams Bayern Munich, Borussia Dortmund, Borussia Mönchengladbach, and Bayern Leverkusen; Italian League teams Juventus, AC Milan, Internazionale, Roma, Fiorentina, Napoli, and Lazio, and French League teams Paris Saint-Germain and Olympique de Marseille.

While fandom is often associated with the spatial anchors of clubs, it is increasingly common, as Giulianotti and Robertson (2004) pointed out, to find dedicated fans of clubs anywhere around the world. This is of course related to a variety of factors—media presence, superstar players, brand image, and global success, among others. Although the most popular clubs in the world are the two powerhouse clubs from Spain, Barcelona FC and Real Madrid, the efforts of the EPL to penetrate the American market has facilitated a lot of fans in the US. In The Lucky Bar, the majority of fans supported English clubs rather than the more globally popular Spanish clubs.

As was highlighted in the previous chapter, Arsenal FC, along with other clubs, has put a lot of effort into creating a global brand for the club, which has aided in building a global fan base. The global fan base, which in part manifests in The Lucky Bar through the supporters groups and the fans who come to watch the team, have different reasons for supporting their teams. Although it would be easy to write off fandom as simply people supporting teams that are successful or have superstar players, fans in The Lucky Bar have a variety of reasons for supporting clubs, many of which move beyond

the success of the club and are rooted in particular senses of place, in particular London, the UK, Europe, and even generally the world outside of the US.

During a match between Arsenal and Tottenham, commonly referred to as the North London Derby, fans from both sides showed up to The Lucky Bar wearing the newest jerseys and other pieces of branded merchandise. As the fans were watching the match various conversations were overheard regarding the value of the teams and how they represent North London. When I spoke with Zach, an Arsenal supporter, about his relationship to North London, he explained, “I support North London, that’s the real London. I know Arsenal is good, but I would support them either way, because, well, it’s North London.” Zach would further explain that he feels a connection with North London because of its history as a working class area of the now global city, at one point claiming, “North London is like the Brooklyn of London. It’s diverse, has style, and is just where everything happens”. Similarly, Chris, an Arsenal supporter from Washington D.C., explained, “Tottenham isn’t really competitive, but it still feels good to beat them and be the winners of North London.” Both Tottenham and Arsenal are based in North London, with their home stadiums only 4 miles apart. However, Arsenal is a far more successful and globally known team. Chris’ desire to be affiliated with winning North London is particularly interesting as it highlights his desire to incorporate the history and importance of geography into his understanding of Arsenal fandom. The battle for North London is also important to Tottenham fans. Jonah, a supporter of Tottenham, explained that he supports the North London club because North London is where the Jewish community originally developed in London, and Tottenham is the club that was historically affiliated with the Jewish population in London, where fans were historically

and affectionately referred to as the “Yid Army.” He supports North London and the historic roots of Tottenham because of his own identity as a Jewish American.

Fans of other teams associate their fandom with the spatial anchors related to the clubs. During a match between Manchester United and Manchester City, fans from both sides debated the value of the clubs in relation to Manchester, the neighborhoods in Manchester that they feel are superior, and why the history of each club makes it a better representation of the place. For some, the understanding of the places where the clubs are from was a leading determinant in why they support said club. Xavier, a Manchester United fan, explained that when he traveled throughout the UK, he liked Manchester more than other cities and started supporting United because of his love for Manchester. Others supported Manchester City for the same reasons. Similarly, some fans, like Tyler, a 30-something professional originally from Boston, found that their attachments to a city foster an interest in the city’s sports teams. While not an avid supporter of the EPL, Tyler does support a team that plays in the French top tier league. His fandom of Paris Saint-Germain is directly related to his travel-abroad experience in Paris. After travelling to France in 2013, Tyler developed an affinity for Paris and thus began supporting PSG in order to feel Parisian and maintain his relationship to the city. He explains, “When I wear my PSG shirt or watch matches, I get to relive those moments in Paris.” Moreover, Tyler states, “I was never even a soccer fan, like, not at all, until I went to France, but now, I guess I like it because I love the city and the people.”

While nostalgia related to places can facilitate fandom, what appears most common throughout The Lucky Bar are those fans who affiliate with imagined geographies of places in search of something more global. Waleed, a Manchester City



fan, cares “so much about the City of Manchester” that he knows about the culture of various neighborhoods throughout Manchester, the history and geography of the city, and regularly stays up to date on news and politics related to the city and the region. But for Waleed his connection to Manchester City goes beyond his connection to the city; it goes to his desire to be more than American, to be a global citizen. Although he is “as American as they come”, Waleed explains that he feels the need to connect with the global, and soccer is one way that he can do that. He sees his support of Manchester City “as a way to express interest in things that are explicitly not American”. “I don’t always want to be a typical American and not care about the world...I guess soccer is part of that for me,” he continued.

Some fans even connect their fandom of clubs to other aspects of the culture of places. Chelsea supporter Crystal generally wears a T-shirt of the famous London-based punk rock band The Clash when supporting Chelsea in The Lucky Bar, because the lead singer of The Clash, Joe Strummer, was famously a big supporter of club. Crystal also played The Clash and Madness on the jukebox when matches were over, to perform her fandom through the other cultural products of London. Similarly, Vince, a Manchester City supporter, once stated that no musical artist from London could compare to The Smiths or Joy Division, two bands that originated in Manchester. Vince, though, was not a fan of the Smiths or Joy Division before he was a fan of Manchester City.

Beyond the fans who support teams because of relationships with the spatial anchors of clubs are those who embrace the brand identity that clubs have built. Many clubs have developed brand identities that travel with the brand as the game has globalized. Take for example the case of Liverpool. While Liverpool is historically a very

successful club, many fans throughout the Lucky Bar connect their fandom of the team to the identity that the team has created; one of working class identity with strong connections to the community. Even though the club has long since abandoned its local nature and acts a global entity, many fans still associate Liverpool as a club that is focused on the local rather than the global, particularly in opposition to other successful clubs such as Manchester United. When I spoke with Matt, he explained, “clubs like United don’t care about anything other than making money, but Liverpool has always supported the community and care about the people who make the club what it is.” Matt would go on to explain why that matters to him.

T: Why does the relationship to the community and local fans matter?

M: You know, so many clubs seem to abandon who they are in search of more fans. But Liverpool, the best team of all time, doesn’t need to do that. They got good by being who they are, and that’s a tough gritty group of guys who just go to work.

T: So what does Liverpool mean to you as an American?

M: I think it represents something pure about the game. I know that they have players from around the world, but it's not like we’re United or Chelsea where all they do is buy the best players in search of trophies. I mean, come on, have some class and build an organization that means something.

T: How did you first come to support Liverpool?

M: I started watching matches during the World Cup and liked the game so I did some research on English teams. Liverpool just seemed really tough and authentic to me. At the time, Man U was everywhere, Arsenal was really good too, but

Liverpool, they just seemed so real and different.

T: What do you mean by real?

M: I guess like, well, that Liverpool the club is part of Liverpool the city. Like if you meet people from Liverpool, you kind of get the feeling that Liverpool FC really does represent them. They're both tough and a little mean. But like, who does Arsenal represent? They stand for nothing.

For Matt, then, his sense of the real and authentic is rooted in part in Liverpool's location and how it is "part of Liverpool the city." He essentializes the people of the city as tough, working class, and authentic, and for him the team represents both the place and what the place means to him.

Although many of the fans in The Lucky Bar support teams because of brands of place associations, there are those fans who enjoy the game, but support the teams for reasons other than team loyalty. Most prominently is the way that some fans follow superstar players, regardless of what team they are playing for, essentially ignoring historic rivalries and supporter traditions, and treating clubs like commodities. Eric, a college student from Pennsylvania, explained that he has a couple of favorite players and supports whatever teams they might play for. Accordingly, he has a closet full of jerseys including teams from England, Spain, and Italy. Eric originally expressed that his favorite team was the London-based club Chelsea F.C., because of the popular Spanish player Fernando Torres who had played for Chelsea between 2011-2015. However, Eric also supports the rising French superstar, Paul Pogba. When I first spoke with Eric, Fernando Torres was no longer playing for Chelsea but Eric's fandom remained. At the time, Paul

Pogba was playing for the Italian league club, Juventus. However, throughout the course of this project, Pogba left Juventus for Manchester United. Accordingly, when I spoke with Eric after the transfer, Eric explained that he had since purchased a new Manchester United jersey with Pogba's name on the back, and explained that he would be watching all of the Manchester United matches this season.

T: So, are you going to support United now?

E: Yeah, I guess I kind of have to right?

T: What about Chelsea?

E: I guess I'll always have a soft spot for Chelsea, but, I follow players, more than teams.

T: So, all those years when you supported Chelsea against United, what happens when they play now?

E: I don't know. As I get older it's harder to change teams. But, I just really like Paul Pogba. I followed him from the beginning of his career. He's probably my favorite player of all time. He could go to Preston North End and I would buy that jersey. So...I guess I have to support United against Chelsea.

T: Do you still follow Fernando Torres? Down in Madrid?

E: No. I mean, I still like him, but it's hard to watch matches from Spain. That's one of the big reasons that I like the EPL, I can actually watch matches. I used to just read about Pogba, but, now I can watch him each week.

## **Discussion**

### **The Soccer-Bar as Place; Enacting Authenticity; Finding Meaning**

As the global media flows of soccer allows for American fans to engage with the game in ways they never have before, the amount of fans and the attention fans give to soccer is increasing. NBC Sports Network and its affiliated properties has had three consecutive years of fan growth related to the EPL (NBC, 2016), and as part of that, fans have shown up to sports bars to watch matches and support their team. As we have seen in the above, The Lucky Bar, the behavior of its patrons, and how they describe the attachment of meaning to their fandom highlights the complicated nature of globalized sports to localized identities.

The sports bar has become an increasingly important space of sports media consumption. Kraszewski (2008) has documented its importance to those searching for traces of home, using the bar as more than just a space of spectatorship, people use the bar as a space to engage in community viewing. Similarly, Dixon, (2014) highlights the complexities of viewing in the pub, but argues that sports fans integrate the pub into their understanding of sport and thus is central to the experience of sports viewing. Weed (2006) also argues that in many cases, viewing sport in the pub started as a necessity, as it was often difficult to watch matches at home; however, even with the increased availability of sport on personal media in the home, the pub holds a central role in the consumption of sport.

Spaces of viewing such as the American version of the English pub then serve as a starting place for understanding how American fans are engaging with these global media sport texts, but also illustrate an important component of their engagement. The

pub serves as a site of viewing, and it operates as a transplanted piece of England.

Although the sports bar is commonplace across America, and many fans use the sports bar to watch the sports of their choice, the viewing of the EPL and other global soccer leagues in the English-style pub illustrates how some American fans seek out an English or European viewing experience. As they describe this desire, and how The Lucky Bar enacts it, their discourse reflects values of geographically embedded authenticity (even if, in some cases, they themselves have never experienced the “real” experience that The Lucky Bar is attempting to reproduce.) “It feels more real” says Vince, a supporter of Manchester City, “I’ve watched matches other places, or at home, but, for some reason, when I watch in a pub, it just feels different.” Vince would go on to explain that being able to cheer on his side and actively cheer against other supporters is what makes the match fun, adding that “when I watch matches in regular bars, the typical American sports fan just doesn’t get it. I need to be around people who watch football the right way.” Similarly, Jessica explains, “when I watch at regular sports bars, the bartenders never really have opinions, I have to ask them to put matches on, and there are like, three other fans, but here (The Lucky Bar), it’s full of real supporters, and everyone has an opinion, it’s like I’m watching in London.” The desire here to watch the matches in ways that seem more English or European to the supporters is tied to the desire of fans to have a “real” fan experience. When fans are supporting clubs, many fans are interested in trying to do it in a way that marks their fandom as appropriate, by the standards of what is believed to be locally appropriate and therefore perhaps more authentic. Thus, the pub seemingly operates as a type of spatial shift, which allows American fans to engage with the game in a way that seems more English and more appropriate. This is similar to how

Weed (2006) describes the pub for fans in the English setting, arguing that the pub allows fans to experience the cultures of the stands without ever setting foot in the actual stadium. If according Weed (2006) English fans are supporting their teams from pubs to experience the realness of the stadium, so too are the American fans who are thus searching for an experience with a similar amount of Englishness. In the latter case, it's not just that they are trying to experience an external viewing experience (the stadium) inside, but they are trying to experience an extra-national experience in the US.

Just as the bar itself creates meanings, so do the ritualized behaviors of watching in the bar. Fans attempting to engage with soccer in the way that was believed to be appropriately English extends beyond the practice of simply viewing in the English-style soccer bar. Many fans attempted to engage with the games in ways that they believed were important to proper local fandom. Whether they were supporting rivalries or performing fandom through the appropriation of English culture, fans were attempting to view the matches and engage in fandom in ways that were consistent with imagined local versions of soccer fandom. Rather than developing new traditions and indigenizing the practices of viewing, the fans in The Lucky Bar were actively attempting to adhere to the practices of English fans. Here, instead of trying to maintain connections with "home" as Kraszewski (2008) has demonstrated in his study of displaced Steeler viewers, fans in The Lucky Bar are making connections with new places through their fandom in soccer. In various ways, fans performed and appropriated regional identities from the UK.

This starts with the way that fans in The Lucky Bar were eager to be what many considered an "authentic" British fan. One of the most important aspects of "authentic" or "real" fandom for the fans in The Lucky Bar was embracing traditions of the clubs and

performing those traditions properly. In the example of the Liverpool fans who sing before matches or the Chelsea supporters who put on the victory song after a match, these traditions are central to their understanding of proper fandom. Moreover, other fans in The Lucky Bar attempted to cheer and chant in pseudo British accents, as “the songs just seem to work better with an accent” according to one Manchester United fan. Paul, the owner of The Lucky Bar, explained, “you get all these people coming in here and they sing in fake accents, it's a bit bizarre, but it adds to the environment I guess.” When I asked Chris, an Arsenal supporter, why he chants “Ar-se-nal” in a fake British accent, he replied, “Because that’s what real Arsenal fans do! We represent North London the right way.” The common fan discourse on “real” or the “right way” is tied to fan understandings of authenticity. Authenticity, in this way, is a concept that fans attempt to embody in their performance of fandom. However, what is most important here is that authenticity is tied to fans’ understandings of local British fandom. The attempt to be a “real” fan is an attempt at being real in their performance of Britishness, London-ness, etc. Whether fans are wearing British fashion labels, listening to local British music, or emulating British localisms in their fandom, it is based on an imagined geography of authentic fandom.

In choosing which teams to support, many of the fans in The Lucky Bar based their support on various aspects related to the local history, politics, and brands of the clubs. For example, when Liverpool fans support the club because of its historic ties to working class people in the city, or because of a team brand that positions it in opposition to the other commercial driven clubs across the EPL, they are embracing the invented traditions of the club and attempting to connect with the community of people and the



place associated with the club. In this way, supporters' fandom of particular teams allows them to have a relationship with people and cultures of the places where the clubs originate and situate their brand. This is evident in the way that various fans connect their support of teams to other aspects of places. In other words, place is important for many fans—they are not just supporting a team because the team is good; rather, they are supporting teams because of something more complex than a record or a superstar player. Most of the fans I spoke with in the bar use their fandom to express something about themselves, particularly in respect to the way they see themselves engaging with the global.

Several fans I spoke with expressed their support of the cities and regions in various ways. Nearly all the beer being consumed in the bar was branded as being British or Irish, the breakfast that people were eating was said to be traditionally English, and the jukebox routinely played songs from popular British artists. Most fans wore various pieces of clothing that symbolically attached them to their team and region of choice; Fred Perry and Ben Sherman shirts—markedly British-style clothing brands—were common amongst those not wearing official team jerseys. The bar was often filled with red or blue jerseys depending on who was playing. However, these jerseys represent more than just a team allegiance. According to Stephen, an Arsenal supporter, he wears his jersey to “feel more European”. The point that Stephen is expressing here is not uncommon. Many fans at The Lucky Bar expressed that their fandom of soccer is in some way connected to their desire to experience a European lifestyle. “There is something so Euro about this, you know,” said Vince, in reference to singing in the bar in support of Manchester City. Similarly, Tim, an Arsenal supporter, explained that his

support of global soccer somehow made him feel respected and intellectual, as opposed to his support of American sports such as baseball and football.

While these practices of translocal fandom allow supporters to engage with the global it is important to note that they are doing so, almost unanimously, through acts of consumption and engaging with places and teams as consumer products. This in turn reduces their understanding of places to that of a brand, furthering the support of an imagined geography that situates a club as no more than a symbolic representation of a corporate conglomerate meant to make money rather than something that truly represents a local space in the global cultural economy.

Furthermore, wearing jerseys and purchasing brands that are associated with places fails to grapple with the depth and complexity that places have to offer. While some fans are able to develop stronger cosmopolitan practices and read about news and politics of places, many of the fans engage in a thin cosmopolitanism that allows them to associate with the good and fun, all the while ignoring the dirty and bad. Here, supporting Arsenal can represent the global cosmopolitan in terms of a symbolic expression of a worldly traveler who wears the latest brands from across London, but at the same time, cannot incorporate the lived realities of Londoners, the history of North London, or anything related to the current political climate. This was evident when I brought up the looming “Brexit” vote during one conversation, only to receive a blank look that suggested the respondent had not heard of the effort of the United Kingdom to leave the European Union.

## **Conclusion**

The global flow of European soccer allows fans around the world to support teams regardless of their geographic location. Giulianotti and Robertson (2004) have called these groups of fans, a “self-invented virtual diaspora.” The use of diaspora here suggests that these fans see themselves as something more than just people watching soccer, but rather, they find ways to see themselves as displaced locals through their affiliation with teams around the world. In this vein, this chapter has empirically analyzed fans that frequent The Lucky Bar in Washington D.C.

In doing so, this chapter presented data from an ethnographic project and details the ways in which fans engage with global soccer, particularly highlighting how fans are attempting to act in ways that are consistent with preconceived notions of fan authenticity, by enacting practices that then allow them to see themselves as connected to the UK in various ways. The desire of fans to be affiliated with the UK develops through a discourse of cosmopolitanism where the supporters desire to be part of the global community, in part by pushing back against stereotypes of the unsophisticated American. While this is not an uncommon desire, particularly among cosmopolitans who travel and experience different parts of the world, these fans are supplementing those desires via their viewing of global soccer.

The fans in The Lucky Bar are not only watching soccer because they like to watch sports, these fans are using sport as a way to connect to a global community. The global community here manifests via the spaces provided by the Lucky Bar. The desire to be something more than American is particularly interesting due to the current political climate, in which narratives of nationalism and xenophobia are on the rise around the

world. While political movements pushing against cultural globalization have made headway, fans in The Lucky Bar show that cultural globalization is welcome and even sought after.

Ironically, although these fans are watching soccer in an attempt to connect with something that is British in search of experiencing the global, they are using their soccer fandom to acquire, *through consumption*, a hybridized global identity. They wear the jerseys, they drink the beer, they eat the UK breakfast, they're surrounded and find meaning in the decorative artifacts of Britishness in the bar. The acts of consumption in this case reduce places and cultures to simplified commercialized understandings, and it is unclear to what extent such enacted soccer fandom expands understandings beyond this commercial realm. There is no doubt that for many of the fans, their experience of watching globalized soccer in a US bar is meaningful and authentic to them, and helps cultivate an identity of being more than an American and even connecting to a larger global imaginary. However, in using global soccer fandom to experience the world, fans likely do not access the truly grounded knowledge and emotional connection that travel and long-term immersion brings. This is perhaps counterproductive to the values of cosmopolitanism that many of these fans espouse.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusion**

When I first started this project I had no idea where it would take me. I was scrambling for ideas that would work as a dissertation topic, trying to blend my interests in globalization, media, and sports. After coming to terms with the pragmatics of research and the limitations I would face in trying to go abroad, I had to deal with few rejected proposal attempts. Then one afternoon, I walked to the newly opened sports bar in the college town where I lived at the time. It was an early round of the UEFA Champions League tournament, so I thought I would go watch some soccer and let my brain relax. When I walked into the bar, there were a few groups of people situated in different places throughout the otherwise, large, and somewhat empty space. I sat down at the bar, awaiting the arrival of a colleague, who was interested in soccer as well. As I sat there in that bar, watching soccer, I looked around and saw various people supporting teams from places, which they were very likely not from, just like myself. As I was watching various teams play, I met students who supported Real Madrid, and others who were cheering on Arsenal and Manchester United. It was in this moment, that I realized I wanted to situate this project around fans in the sports bar. If these various groups of fans that I ran into were eagerly supporting soccer teams from afar and collectively identifying with places around the world, they were doing so in much of the same way that the college students supported their local university football team where I was studying. It occurred to me at that moment that the way soccer flows around the world, beyond the major international tournaments, was something to consider and was worthy of serious study. Suddenly it was clear, I wanted to study the way that European soccer has globalized, and how

through that globalization, people in the United States interact with it. While these thoughts occurred to me during a viewing session at a local sports bar, it surely had to be something worthy of a dissertation topic. Thus, after months of project design, fieldwork, data analysis, and writing, this is the final result.

### **Dissertation Summary**

In my attempt to engage with global soccer, I was inspired by the influential work of cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai, global media studies scholar Marwan Kraidy, and sports media scholars Toby Miller, David Rowe, and Stephen Jackson. Perhaps most important in the development of this project was the foundational work of C.L.R. James. In his seminal work *Beyond a Boundary*, James (1963) wrote about cricket in the West Indies, but in doing so, wrote about so much more, including changing social relations, globalization, and postcolonial notions of race. With the title of his book, James was referring to the boundary line in cricket, and explaining how what happens within the boundary was affected by that which happened beyond the boundary. As an homage to James, I have titled this work *Beyond Boundaries* (boundaries in this instance are both in relation to the game and the state) and have attempted to write a dissertation that is not about soccer per se, but rather uses the sport as a way to understand the contemporary cultural moment.

These important scholars have influenced and changed the way that various scholars, including myself, conceptualize and research the processes and effects of sports (and media) globalization—largely moving the field away from theories of cultural imperialism, and presenting more nuanced views of global flows of culture. Accordingly,

this project developed through a framework that would build on the foundations they all laid.

In chapter two, I wanted to start this project by mapping out the complexity of globalization and how a cultural industry and a cultural form moves around the world (which is the driving force for the entire dissertation). Soccer, then, becomes an interesting case upon which to focus. While many sports have globalized and are currently in the process of globalizing, soccer presents an interesting wrinkle that many other sports do not—it is not an explicitly American cultural product. Much has been written about the National Basketball Association and its move into Asian and Oceanic markets, or the colonial legacy of baseball in Asia and parts of Latin America. However, what I found fascinating was the fact that soccer, a truly global cultural form, did not originate from the United States, but rather was making its way into the United States. American fans are now increasingly engaging with soccer and supporting leagues and teams from around the world, including the mediocre domestic league, Major League Soccer.

The mapping out of soccer's globalization began with an understanding that the flow of culture around the world can be conceptualized through the various scapes as developed by Appadurai. Here, Appadurai is challenging older models of American cultural imperialism and suggests that the world is more complex as flows are multidirectional, and composed of more than just images; rather, they contain people, money, media, technology, and ideologies. Thus, chapter two applied Appadurai's model to global soccer, presenting a soccer sportscape that is indeed complex and multidirectional, describing how people, money, and images flow around the world, in

various directions, from the core to the periphery, and back again. Perhaps the best example is the case of the globally popular Manchester United. In this case, an American company sponsors Manchester United, an American-owned team, based in Manchester, England, whose ethnically and nationally diverse players play with kits manufactured and designed by a German Clothing Company, and are supported nearly everywhere in the world. Through detailing the various ways that the five scapes relate to soccer, this chapter set the foundation upon which the remaining chapters would develop.

Chapter three narrowed the focus of the dissertation. Building on the previous chapter's mapping of globalization, this chapter focused on what the globalization of soccer means for the identity and meaning of specific clubs, particularly as said clubs were changed in to global brands in pursuit of profits. As the English Premier League and others from Europe have followed the trends of cultural globalization, one surely needs to wonder what effects that might have for institutions that are supposedly so ingrained in specific places around the world. Throughout this chapter, I sought to complicate the commonplace understanding of soccer clubs as representative of the local, arguing that through the processes of globalization, and indeed, commercialization, many clubs throughout the top tiers of Europe have effectively been removed from the local in their pursuit of the global. In other words, once a club chases global domination, various factors change the relationship of the club to the local, and it becomes deterritorialized. This can of course happen in a number of ways, however, what I present in chapter three, is how the commercialization and branding of clubs has made clubs less beholden, and therefore less representative, to/of the local places which they purport to represent. This is perhaps best illustrated via the Spanish club, FC Barcelona, which has historically



served as a representation of Catalonia. However, commercial profit is now more important than meaningful representation, and thus more central to a club's identity, and the connection to places and politics is merely just a component of the clubs' global brand. The chapter ends by focusing on the selling of soccer to the US market using the "Britishness" of the support as a potential brand attribute. May US fans be attracted to soccer because it is a non-US sport, and do they use this non-US branded element in how they enact their fandom and in their understanding of their own fandom?

Chapter four serves as a primary empirical chapter for the dissertation and is built around participant observation of soccer fans in a soccer bar, in Washington D.C. As I was inspired to research fans, I needed to do so in a way that made sense and met the pragmatics of teaching classes and limited resources. Because of this, Washington D.C. was chosen as a place of study and the fans in The Lucky Bar served as the primary scene through which I would conduct my fieldwork. Inspired by Marwan Kraidy's application of hybridity to global media audiences, I chose to focus on the way that global soccer fans were using soccer to experience and engage with the global, albeit, from the comfort of the local soccer bar. After conducting fieldwork and analyzing the data that I collected, I presented an argument that again builds on the previous chapters and suggests that indeed fans are using soccer to engage with places from around the world, connecting their fandom to the politics of places in various ways. Importantly, however, in this chapter I develop the argument that although people are engaging in global soccer fandom in ways that might resemble or even act as cosmopolitanism, their understanding and engagements with soccer is situated through a lens of consumption and entertainment which otherwise complicates their fandom as both an act of consumer choice and

cosmopolitan desire. Thus, fans are treating places and people as commodities to be consumed, rather than truly experiencing and engaging with the local in a way that is meaningful and complex.

Throughout the whole of the dissertation, I present a picture of what globalization means for soccer, and what soccer means for globalization. In short, through the global dispersal of the industry, images, and fans, soccer has made its way to the United States, and many fans are spending a lot of time and money in support of it. However, as the imperatives of globalization suggest a focus on capital accumulation and making investors happy, clubs have abandoned their connection to the local. Thus, while fans are supporting teams that in many ways do represent places, in reality, they are also supporting global brands that have done a great job at using the currency of places to build an image built around the history of clubs.

The relationship between sports, media, and globalization is a growing field of inquiry that has resulted in numerous papers and books, all collectively contributing to the field. In an attempt to add to the larger body of literature in a meaningful way, this dissertation was developed around a focus on challenging the cultural imperialism model, and attempting to understand soccer fans as transnational media consumers. By mapping the globalization of soccer and understanding teams as transnational corporations that act as global brands, I have complicated the understanding of the relationship between clubs and places. Relying on concepts such as hybridity and cosmopolitanism allowed me to conceptualize fans in a way that investigates the realities of media use in their everyday lives, particularly by focusing on how fans are constructing global identities via their fandom and consumption of global soccer.

As the world continues to globalize, it appears that fans are searching out global experiences, even if that manifests via media consumption. The exposure to the global is thus allowing fans to incorporate aspects of global culture into their everyday lives. However, as the circulation of culture is often done through the commercial media, cosmopolitanism and hybrid identities are manifesting through the flawed practice of consumption. This results in fans treating cultures and places as commodities to be consumed, even though they associate them with the politics of places. This will inevitably reduce the understanding of places to something that is self-serving in nature. While fans are trying to support a team because it represents the politics of a place and this is meaningful to them, fans are embracing teams and incorporating team identities, through acts of consumption, into their own identities for the purpose of constructing themselves as global cosmopolitans, without going further to understand the complexity of places.

### **Limitations & Directions for future research**

This project is of course not free of its limitations. This starts with an acknowledgement that fieldwork becomes richer and more complex with increased time and depth in the field. While I was in Washington D.C. intermittently over the course of six months, it would no doubt serve the mission of this project to have spent more time in the field. This would have allowed more connections with fans, possible interactions outside of the sports bar, and a deeper consideration of how fandom is enacted in other spaces of their everyday lives. Methodologically, this project relied on full participant observation with unstructured interviews in limited interactions with soccer fans. While

the method produced ample data, it would have served the mission of the project to have more structured interviews, including interviews that happened outside of the confines of the sports bar. Using a true embedded ethnographic method, which would situate me in the local for an extended period of time, would have allowed me to develop stronger and more in-depth relationships with participants, and understand the role of sport fandom in other aspects of their lives, not just in relation to the performance of fandom in the sports bar.

Moreover, while this research was limited to one bar in Washington D.C., a multi-sited ethnographic project would likely have yielded more complex data, through which other observations and analyses could be made. This of course forces one to ask “How unique is The Lucky Bar?” Conducting a multi-sited ethnography would allow me to analyze the type of meaning making in less globalized US locations, or places with different histories of global flows. Does soccer mean the same thing to Latinos in Los Angeles as it does for Cosmopolitans in Washington D.C.?

Although this study focuses on the phenomenon of American fans supporting teams globally, acting as a self-invented virtual diaspora, there are many other directions where this research can and should go. While I was limited to one location in the Washington D.C. area, it would serve the greater mission of this project to examine similar fans and places throughout the entire United States, especially in considering how fandom may be limited in the western US due to the times of the matches being early in the morning. Moving this project beyond the confines of English soccer, and focusing on populations that watch Spanish soccer, whether they are American fans or part of a diaspora, would be useful in understanding the complexity of fandom. The focus on

diaspora also presents an interesting and ripe area for study. Throughout the United States, and other places around the world, people from diasporas routinely engage in sports consumption, and in doing so are maintaining connections to home or constructing new diaspora identities, where sport is important to their understanding of who they are. A focus on diaspora groups would surely contribute to a more complete understanding of sport. Similarly, considering the increasing flow of global sports into the United States, paying attention to the industries and fans of other sports such as rugby and cricket would also be useful to examine how fans are understanding various sports, and incorporating them into new global identities.

Moving this project in a new direction, it would also be useful to understand the role of the commodification and commercialization of sport around the world in new locations. This of course opens up significant areas to study, but perhaps most interesting is a consideration of new leagues in developing countries. This would allow one to focus on the transnational flow of sporting ideology, and to empirically analyze issues related to sporting labor, local fandom, and relations between sport and media. Similarly, there exists an increasing trend of sports being used to sell places. Multiple analyses are needed to understand the role of sport in the commodification of places, the development of place brands, and the various aspects of how places and sports work together.

Lastly, one area where this research can move is in the analysis of sport as a forum for resistance. Historically, sporting events such as the World Cup or the Olympic Games have been used at various times as both spectacles in the promotion of capitalism (and globalization) and spaces of resistance. As the world continues to globalize, sport can and will play an important role in the communication of resistance, both by players

and fans. One can of course research the way fans use sport to resist globalization, maintaining an affiliation with the local, the national in the face of the global, or how fans communicate their discontent via the performances of sport. Players can and will fight for labor rights, equal pay across genders, and racial equality, not just in sport, but throughout society at large. As media become increasingly fragmented and personalized, it is perhaps sport that provides the greatest reach to spread messages to the most amount of people at any given time.

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### **Curriculum Vitae**

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Ph.D., Mass Communications, Pennsylvania State University

M.M.C., Mass Communications, Louisiana State University

B.S., Kinesiology, California State University—Fullerton

#### **Selected Publications:**

Antunovic, D., Parsons, P., **Cooke, T. R.** (2016). 'Checking' and googling: Stages of news consumption among young adults. *Journalism*, Advance online publication. doi: 10.1177/1464884916663625

McAllister, M. P., **Cooke, T. R.** & Buckley, C. (2015). Fetishizing Flo: Constructing retail space and gendered labor in digital-era advertising. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 32(5), 347-362.

McAllister, M. P. & **Cooke, T. R.** (2015) Advertising and marketing. *Dictionary of American History, Supplement: America in the World, 1776 to the Present*.

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2014-2016     Instructor, Pennsylvania State University

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